

Bishop *PATRICK*'s
SERMONS
On Contentment, &c.

24
SERMONS
BISHOP PATRICK'S
ON CONTEMPT &c.

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FIFTEEN
SERMONS
UPON
CONTENTMENT

AND
Resignation to the Will of God.

AS ALSO
Two SERMONS
On the Ministration of ANGELS.

WITH
A PRAYER at the End of each Discourse,
suitable to the particular Subject of it.

By SYMON PATRICK, D. D.
late Lord Bishop of Ely.

Never before Printed.

With an Exact CATALOGUE of his Works.

L O N D O N:

Printed for D. Browne, A. Bell, J. Darby, A. Bettef-
worth, J. Pemberton, C. Rivington, J. Hooke, R. Crut-
tenden and T. Cox, J. Battley and E. Symon, F. Clay.
MDCCXIX.

FIFTEEN
SERMONS
UPON
CONTINENT

A A HND
A Right Honourable the Viscount of God.
AS ALSO

Two & R. M. N. S.
On the



where Lord Biron

Went

With an Extra Catalogue of his Works

L O N D O N

Printed for D. Browne, A. Bell, J. Diney, A. Baskin,
J. Pemberton, C. Rivington, J. Hook, R. Cur-
tiss and T. Cox, J. Baskin and E. J. Cox, F. Cox.
MDCCXIX



TO THE
READER.



THE Seventeen Sermons contain'd in this Volume, are the only Pieces of the *late Doctor Symon Patrick, Lord Bishop of Ely*, which have been published since his Death. They were compos'd in the Prime of his Years, and very fairly written out by himself in one Volume. They were put into the Booksellers Hands by his Relict, *Mrs. Penelope Patrick*, now living, with her Desire that they might be made Publick.

The Author was so eminent for his great Learning and singular Piety, and
his

his Practical Writings and Books of Devotion have been so well received, that the Booksellers think it a considerable Recommendation of these Discourses, and the Prayers annexed to them, that they can assure the World, they are the Genuine Works of *that Excellent Prelate*, and printed with great Care and Exactness from his own Manuscript. They have also been assured by their Friends who have perused these Sermons, that as *Mens being contented in all Estates of Life*, is a Matter of great Consequence to their Happiness, so the Reader will here find *the Duty of Contentment* very fully treated of, and recommended with all that Clearness and Strength of Reasoning, and with all that Learning and true Piety, which might be expected in so Celebrated an Author, writing upon so Important a Subject.

THE



THE CONTENTS.

	Pag.
Sermon I. } Heb. xiii. 5. --- Be content with such Things as ye have: ---	I 32
Sermon II. } III. } 63	
	IV. } 89
	V. } 108
Sermon VI. } I Tim. vi. 8. And having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith con- tent.	134 159 181 214 245

Sermon

		Pag.
Sermon	{ XI. } Heb. xiii. 5. --- Be	289
	{ XII. } content with such	323
	{ XIII. } Things as ye	356
	{ XIV. } have : ---	387
	{ XV. }	413

TWO SERMONS on Michaelmas-
Day, 1672.

Sermon	{ XVI. } Mat. xviii. 10. -- For	445
	I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father which is in Hea-	
	{ XVII. } ven.	475



SERMON

tion of the Certainty of the Christian Doctrine



S E R M O N I

HE B. XIII. 5.

Be content with such Things as ye have.



THESE Converted *Jews* being under great Persecution by their unbelieving Countrymen; (as we read in several Places of this Epistle) there were many of them, as may be gathered also

from sundry Passages in it, that began to think of retiring back again to their Old Religion, rather than endure so many Hardships in their new Profession, for Christ Jesus his Sake. To prevent which fatal Miscarriage, this Divine Writer uses many Arguments; encouraging and strengthening their Minds, from the Consideration

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tion of the Certainty of the Christian Doctrine, the Dignity of its Author, the glorious Example he had set before them, the Power he had in the Heavens, which made him an High-Priest of a better Rank than any of the House of Aaron could be; and the Hope of Eternal Life, wherewith he was able to reward all his constant Disciples; yea, from the Consideration also of their own Sufferings, as soon as they entred into the State of Christianity; according as you read, Chap. x. 32. *Call to remembrance the former Days, in which after ye were enlightned, ye endured a great Fight of Affliction:* Which no wise Men would have done, unless they intended to proceed as they began; and not lose the Reward of suffering so much, for want of Patience to suffer a little more. By these and such like Arguments, I say, he persuades them not to revolt from Christ, as some did to their utter undoing; but to *hold fast the Profession of their Faith without wavering*, Chap. x. 23. there being the greatest Hazard which they ran, if they *sinned wilfully after they had received the Knowledge of the Truth*, Ver. 26. no less than to lose all Hope of Pardon, which was declared to Men only in Christ Jesus; whom they basely forsook and renounced, when they apostatiz'd from his Religion.

Now that which made some fly back, was Fear of Sufferings, Love of Pleasure, and Covetousness, or Love of the World. Against these Three therefore, he fortifies those who still continued the Profession of Christianity, in the Begin-

Beginning of this Chapter ; and bids them be so far from fearing any thing, as *to love the Brethren, to entertain Strangers, and to remember them that were in Bonds, and suffered Adversity,* Ver. 1, 2, 3. that is, to suffer with others, when they did not yet suffer on their own Accounts. A Thing which the false-hearted Christians would never do ; whose Charity waxed Cold, and who were afraid to own the Disciples of our Lord in Time of Distress, lest they should be accounted such themselves, and so be brought into Trouble, and suffer as they did. And as he warns them against this base Fear, and vile Cowardise ; so he seems, in the next place, to give them a Caution against all impure Pleasures, for the Love of which (as you may gather from Chap. xii. 16.) some turned their backs on their Saviour, and parted with their Hope in him. Ver. 4. *Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled ; but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.*

After which, he proceeds here in my Text, to advise them not to be so careful for the Things of this World, as some were ; nor to be afraid of Want, though the Days were very bad, and they perhaps might be spoiled of all their Goods, and bereaved of all their Friends : For he gives them Assurance, that God will provide ; and that Assurance he would have them esteem sufficient for them. *Let your Conversation be without Covetousness, and be content with such Things as ye have : For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, &c.*

That which I intend then to treat of from these Words, is, That present Things, though our Condition be afflicted, should suffice us : Or, that we should be well satisfied in our present Condition, whatsoever it be. So the Words are expressly in the Greek, ἀρεσμεύουσι τὰς παρῶν, *being contented with Things present ; or letting Things present and at hand suffice you.* Rest satisfied with what you have now, and be not too solicitous for the future.

This Lesson St. Paul teaches his Son Timothy, 1 Epist. Chap. vi. 8. *Having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content.* But he did not teach it him before he had learnt it himself ; for he tells the *Philippians*, he had arrived to a great Perfection in this Virtue. *Phil. iv. 11, 12. I have learnt in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : Every where (or at all Times) and in every thing I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.* This was a true Israelite indeed, in whom there was no Guile. He was not like that wicked Generation in the Wilderness (by whose fearful Example these Christian *Hebrews* are deterred from looking back, as they did toward *Egypt*, Chap. iii. & iv.) who when they were hungry knew not how to bear it, but murmured and spake against God, saying, *Can he furnish a Table in the Wilderness ? He gave us Water, can he give Bread also ? Can he provide Flesh for his People ?* And when they were full, could no better bear that ; but waxed fat, and

*and kicked against God; they ate and drank, and rose up to play, i. e. became beastly Idolaters. No; he knew how to be full, and how to be hungry: and in both Conditions kept an equal, moderate, and contented Mind; neither murmuring and repining in one State, nor waxing too frolicksome and wanton in the other. Nay, whatsoever the Condition was, that is, whatsoever the Circumstances of it were; in whatsoever Time, or Place, or Thing it was, that he suffered or abounded, he knew how to behave himself, and to be well pleased. Which is the Reason, I suppose, that he uses so many Expressions of the same Import; telling us, he had learned both *how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and how to be hungry, how to abound and to suffer need.* A Virtue highly admired by Heathens themselves; particularly by the Famous Royal Philosopher *Antoninus*, who praises *Socrates* upon this Account, and his own Father for treading in his Steps; who knew * *ἀπέχεσθαι ἢ ἀπολαύειν τέτατον*, &c. both how to abstain from, and how to enjoy those Things, which other Men could not want thro' their Weakness, or by Reason of their Intemperance could not truly enjoy. This made him justly esteemed a Great Man, or, in his Phrase, a Man of a compleat and invincible Spirit; who, as he would not yield to the Temptations either of Poverty or Abundance; so had not without much Pains and commendable Labour, attain'd*

* Lib. I. c. 13.

such a strong Habit and firm Constitution of Mind. And indeed so much St. Paul here intimates, as *Theophylact* well observes, that it is a Matter of some Labour and Discipline to bring a Man's self into a Conformity with his Condition, and to continue the same contented Person when that alters and changes from better to worse. For he saith, *ἐμαθόν*, *I have learned*; which is as much as to say, that *γυμνασίας δύνται καὶ μελέτης*, there is Need of Exercise, and Study is required to attain it. The greatest Apostle could not otherwise come by it. He had it not by Inspiration, as he had the Gift of Tongues, and Prophecies, and such like, *διδάχης ἀγαθὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ ἀσκήσεως*; and therefore it is a Business of Learning and Meditation, (as *Oecumenius* speaks) to which we must use and exercise our selves, that by perpetual Practice we may come to this happy Temper; and after much Consideration prevail with our selves, in every State to be content.

It will be necessary then, for your better learning of it, that I show you,

I. What this Contentment is.

II. What Reason there is for it. And

III. How we may attain it. Though indeed by understanding the Reason why we should be contented, we shall learn, in great part, how to possess our selves of this Virtue.

I. For the *First*; To be contented with present Things, I shall thus describe.

It

It is to feel such a Plenitude and Fulness in our Souls, that makes us so well pleas'd in the Condition wherein we are, as not to suffer the Desire of a Change to trouble our Spirit, or discompose our Duty.

It will be profitable, I think, to take this Description in Pieces; and by Parts to teach you this Lesson, which you are to learn. Which cannot be well done, without giving you some Notice also, how the Apostles and all good Christians came to learn it.

1st, Then, I say, it consists in a *Fulness of the Soul*; for by a better Word than that, I know not how to express it: All that is necessary to be said concerning the Nature of Contentment, is contain'd in it, and flows from it. Then we are well, when we find a Kind of Self-Sufficiency, as the Word *αὐτάρκεια* signifies; such a Repletion (if I may use that Phrase) within our own Breasts, that we feel no Pain, nor Trouble of Emptiness there; nor require any thing more for our Satisfaction, than we have already. And so the Word, which elsewhere is rendred Contentment, is in one place rendred Sufficiency.

2 Cor. ix. 8. *And God is able to make all Grace abound toward you; that ye always having all Sufficiency in all things, may abound in every good Work.* *Ὁσα σοφίαι*, saith Oecumenius; behold the Wisdom of the Apostle, who wishes them only a Sufficiency of Carnal Things, but of Spiritual an Abundance. Yet this Sufficiency is so great a Blessing, that they who have it, cannot be said to want: And it depends, as

you shall hear, upon the Abundance of God's Grace towards us; which, when we consider, will make us think a little of this World sufficient to our Satisfaction. But be it little or much that we enjoy, when any Soul is full, and hath enough, and faith, that it sufficeth, then it is contented. And so that very Word, which the Apostle uses in my Text, is translated by our Interpreters, *Job. xiv. 8. Show us the Father, and ~~apart~~ it sufficeth*: There needs no more; we shall be full enough. From which Place you may both learn what Contentment is, and where this Fulness or Sufficiency is to be found; even in God himself, in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God alone can fill the Soul of Man, who calls himself All-sufficient: And there is no such satisfying Sight of him, as that which we have in his Son our Saviour, who hath revealed his Blessed Nature and Will to our great Contentment. To him therefore we must go; for he that hath the Son, hath the Father also; and he that hath him, hath all things.

But that we may not deceive our selves by a slight Pleasure in Words, Sounds, and Phrases; I shall briefly show you, what this Fulness is, which a Christian Soul hath from God the Father of our Lord Jesus; and by that Means, wherein our true Contentment consists.

I. And in the first place you must understand, that there is a great Store and Plenty, no less than a Fulness of Divine Wisdom and Knowledge, which God hath bestowed on us; in which the Mind of Man, when he entertains it, and fully
believes

believes it, cannot but find exceeding great Contentment of Spirit.

It is certain, there is nothing that it more naturally desires, than to know and understand. Our Souls have a peculiar Inclination and Affection to Truth ; and are likewise big with Designs and Contrivances of several Sorts. Their Thoughts are ever restless and unquiet : They are too active and vigorous, to stand still, and do nothing ; insomuch that if they can find no other Employment, they will trouble themselves, and perplex and disquiet all at home. For no Man is discontented, but he is crucified by himself, and his own Thoughts are his Tormentors. That we might never therefore be so idle as to vex our selves, nor roll and tumble about perpetually in our own unquiet Imaginations ; God hath propounded the most Glorious Objects, on which to fix our busy Thoughts ; and imparted to us the Knowledge of a vast Number of Things, some of which were never known in the World before ; and the rest but imperfectly understood, and uncertainly believed ; and those of the greatest Concernment to our Souls, and most highly importing to our Happiness ; whereby that natural Appetite after Wisdom and Understanding is abundantly filled and replenished, and all other Appetites are strangely gratified and pleased too.

For there is nothing can yield greater Satisfaction to the Heart of Man, than this Revelation which God hath made of his Mind and Will by the Gospel of Christ, in such
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a large and ample manner, as it self witness. *I am persuaded, Brethren, saith St. Paul, Rom. xv. 14, that ye are filled with all Knowledge; able to admonish one another. This was the End for which God gave such Gifts unto Men, as upon this Day, and made some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, &c. till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man; unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ, Ephes. iv. 10, 13. There is, you see, a great Fulness of Divine Knowledge communicated to us; the nearer unto which we arrive, the more contented and well pleased we shall be in every State. And therefore the Apostle prays for the Colossians, Col. i. 9. that they might be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding; as the first Blessing he could wish to those, whose Happiness he exceedingly desired. And to such Persons as these it is, that this Divine Writer speaks, when he exhorts them to be contented with such Things as they had.*

They were Men that knew the superabundant Love of God to Mankind; being persuaded that he had spoken to us by his own Son, (as you read Chap. i. 1.) a Person higher than all Angels; who, at God's Command, worshipped him when he came into the World, and acknowledg'd themselves to be but Ministering Spirits to the Servants of this Glorious Prince, the *Heir of all Things,*

Lord,

Lord, what a Grace was this! What a noble Pitch of Knowledge! whereby Mankind were made certain, that there is a Providence greater than their own, which watches over them, and takes care of them here on Earth. It assured them beyond all Dispute, that the Great God, whose Power is infinite and unlimited, doth not despise us; but is so far from it, that he desires to be our Friend. For they had the Satisfaction to know (and so have we) that he loves us so well, as to manifest himself in our Flesh: Jesus who spoke unto us, being the *Brightness of his Glory, the express Image of his Person, upholding all Things by the Word of his Power*, Chap. i. 3. They saw clearly that God was in him, reconciling the World to himself; because, when he had by himself, as it there follows, *purged our Sins, he sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on High*. What a Discovery was this, that this Son of God should dye, to take away the Sins of the World! What an Honour hath he put upon our Nature? First, in appearing in it; then in purging us by such a noble Sacrifice; and then preferring us in the Person of Jesus, to such great Dignity and Glory, as he now hath in the Heavens. What greater Satisfaction can there be, than to know that Christ Jesus reigns: To see him, as he speaks, Chap. ii. 9. *who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the Suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour*! To know that we are under his tender Care; and that he is our Intercessor with God, ready to do us any good Offices in the Court of Heaven

Heaven, when we have any Business there? What would we desire more, than to have such an affectionate *High-Priest* over the House of God, full of Compassion and Mercy; and not without a Royal Power, to succour those who flee unto him for Sanctuary and Assistance? Who can never fail not to be deny'd; having by one Sacrifice of himself once offered, obtained an eternal Redemption for us. And who can never fail to discharge his Office (having *learnt Obedience by the Things that he suffered*) for the Benefit and Comfort of all those, who depend upon his Power, Faithfulness and Love: Who is sat down for ever, *at the Right Hand of God*, to reign till *all his Enemies are become his Footstool*: And *both delivered us already from the Fear of Death; and destroyed him that had the Power of Death, which is the Devil*: And made *Angels also ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation*. Which he will come one Day to bestow upon all those, *who look for his second appearing*; being become the *Author of Eternal Salvation, unto all them that obey him*, Chap. i. ult. V. 9, &c.

This and much more, is the Subject of this single Epistle: And therefore though they suffered Persecution, though they were spoiled of their Goods, and endur'd many Reproaches, and other Crosses, yet they might be contented in their present State. For they had a Fulness of Divine Reason in them, many heavenly Notions that would be ever presenting themselves to them; such Store of rare Meditations, that
there

there was no Room, no Place empty for discontented Thoughts to come and lye in. They could presently think in the worse Condition ; Well ! let it be so : But we are of Kin to God the Father of all ; we are under his most wise and good Providence ; we may trust him, for he loves us , as appears by his sending Jesus , to dwell among us : And Jesus , who did and suffered such great Things for us , is still alive, and reigns , and will reign for evermore. His Power can never be impaired. When we are dead, he can raise us again ; and while we are alive, he will not fail to intercede with God for us , and support and comfort us in all our Sufferings ; for he was tempted as we are.

They knew that none could be miserable, who were beloved of God : That none could want, who had his Providence for their Store-house : That none could be alone, who were in the Company of Christ and his holy Angels, that attended on them. That it was impossible but his Sacrifice should prevail for any Thing needful, which was of such Force, as to prevail for the Remission of the Sins of the World : That he who will come again from Heaven to reward us, cannot at present be unmindful of us. That all Sufferings are but to prepare us for a greater Recompence of Reward, by patient enduring the Pain and Trouble of them : And that they are so far from being the Tokens of God's Anger, that they are in some Cases the Marks and Characters of his Sons ; who could not therefore reasonably complain of their Heavenly Father, but rather submit unto him with

with a quiet and contented Spirit, as became the Heirs of his Love.

Especially if you consider, that they had not only an Abundance of these Heavenly Thoughts to fill and satisfy their Minds, but likewise very full Grounds, abundant and satisfactory Reasons, to persuade them of the Truth of these Things, which were the Matter of their Belief. According to that Prayer of the Apostle for the Colossians, Chap. ii. 2. That their Hearts might be comforted, being knit together in Love, and unto all Riches of the full Assurance of Understanding, to the Acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. That is, he desired they might find the Sweetness and Benefit of their Religion, by loving one another, and by understanding fully and certainly all the Secrets of Christianity; the rare Methods that God the Father anciently, and now Christ Jesus our Lord, had taken, to bring Men to Happiness. And indeed all was comprized in this last Design of Divine Grace in Christ, in whom they would find, if they searched diligently, such manifold Wisdom of God, as could not be expressed by less Words, than *all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*. Where you may observe, that he wishes them not only the *Riches of Understanding*, and all *Riches*, but a *full Assurance* likewise: Such sure and certain Grounds of Belief, that they might acknowledge this great Mystery, in which was comprehended such a Fulness of Wisdom.

Now

Now this full *Affurance* our Lord wrought in them, by his wonderful Works, by his Death, by his Resurrection, but especially by the Holy Ghost, with which they are often said to be *filled*; and which was a Divine Testimony, whereby God bare witness to them who preached the Gospel, and assur'd the World, they *delivered nothing but his Mind and Will*, Heb. xi. 4.

It was clear and apparent by the Coming of the Holy Ghost, that God takes Care of Men, and bears a singular Love to them, and would be very familiar with them. This fully satisfied all that impartially considered of the Words of Jesus, who said he was *the Son of God*. They would not doubt any longer of his Innocency, when he was on Earth, and of his Glory now in the Heavens. They saw indeed, that his Sacrifice was highly acceptable to God, and that he had purged away our Sins by his own Blood. They did as good as behold him sitting on the *Throne of his Glory, at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High*: Nay, their Faith was raised to behold that Place, which he was preparing for them, in the heavenly Mansions; and they made no Scruple to conclude, that he would come again, and take them to himself, that where he was, there they might be also. For he had *anointed them* by the Holy Ghost to an Heavenly Kingdom, and he *had sealed them*, and given them the *Earnest* of the Celestial Inheritance, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. Nay, the very Gifts which were an Evidence of all this, could not but fill their Minds also with very great Wonder,

and make them, being possessed with such high Thoughts, less capable of being possessed with any other.

And what should hinder us from being possessed with them too; at once receiving the Splendor of this Divine Light, and true Peace and Satisfaction of Heart? For he that hath this *Fulness of Knowledge and Understanding*, and a *full Assurance* of it, founded upon such substantial Reasons, is in the ready Way to perfect Contentment; nay to the greatest Comfort and Consolation; there being nothing more delicious and full of Ravishment, than these great Truths which I have mentioned, and of which our Saviour, blessed be the Divine Grace, hath given such good Assurance, that he hath left no Place for doubting, concerning what he hath taught, and what his Apostles in his Name made known to the World. We cannot entertain them, but we shall feel inward Satisfaction, entring into our Hearts together with them; as on the contrary, if we be ignorant of them, or do not sincerely believe them, we shall be Strangers to true Contentment, be our Condition never so prosperous in this World. And therefore, I observe, when St. Paul speaks of this Matter, in the Place I named before, *Phil. iv. 12.* and saith, *I am instructed in all Things, both to be full, and to be hungry, &c.* he uses a word (*μυστήριον*) which signifies, he had the Mystery, or Secret of this Thing. He knew, that is, the Mystery of the Christian Religion, and was full well versed in the Knowledge of the Lord Jesus

Jesus, by which he was enabled to preserve an Equality of Mind, and in every State to be content. There is no Way therefore for us to arrive at this Felicity, but by the same Fulness of Understanding, so fully possessing our Minds and Hearts, that it thrusts out all those troublesome Thoughts which are wont to make our Lives irksome and tedious to us: Which Effect it cannot fail to have, if we suffer it to work according to its natural Tendency, and produce something in our Wills, answerable to this Fulness of holy Thoughts in our Minds. And that is the next Thing I am to observe.

2. Besides this Fulness of Understanding, there is a Fulness of Love likewise, in the Soul of a Christian, to God and our Saviour, which makes it exceedingly well contented and satisfied in every State of Life. Of this you read, *Eph. iii. 19.* where the Apostle continuing his Prayer for them, desires they may know *the Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge*, that they might be filled with all the Fulness of God. What that Fulness is, you will best discern by observing what goes before, *that ye may know the Love of Christ.* This is the Thing he desires for them, that they may know how great the Love of Christ was, in giving himself and purchasing such Blessings for us: Which is a Knowledge that excels and surpasses all other which the World most admires (so those Words may be expounded, *which passeth Knowledge*;) and the Effect of that will be, to fill the Hearts of those in whom it is, *with all Love to God*; for that sure is meant
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by *all the Fulness of God* in this Place. God is Love, and when we think of his Love, the most natural Product of it, is to make us like to him in Love; to have our Hearts burn with a most vehement Affection to him. Now the most natural Effect of this Love to God, especially when it is in such Fulness as the Love of Christ is apt to beget, is to thrust out of our Hearts all inordinate Love of the World, and to make us well satisfied in such Love of God to us, and such Love in us to God.

And indeed *Theophylact* very pertinently asks the Question upon those Words, [*to know the Love of Christ*] τίς τὸ το αἰγροεῖ; What Christian can be ignorant of this? And he answers it as well: None so much as they that are complaining of what happens to them every Day, and prefer the *Mammon of this World* before God. If we knew this Love, saith he, ἐκ αὐτῆς τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν ἀγάπης, &c. we should neither murmur against the Providence of God, nor be so intent upon these worldly Things; which make so many apostatize from God, who hath so loved them.

This therefore is another Thing, that must fill the Hearts of those that will be contented in any Condition; (as you may hear more before I conclude this Argument.) For when the Apostle desires the *Ephesians*, v. 13. That they would not faint at his Tribulations which he endured, he prays that they might but know the Love of Christ, so as to be filled with all the Fulness of God. (with abundant Love to him,) and then they

they would be satisfied both in his Sufferings, and in their own also. That this is his Meaning, is apparent from the 14th Verse: where he saith, *For this Cause he bowed his Knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; i. e.* because they should not be too much troubled at his Tribulations. And this was the Thing you see, that he so humbly begg'd of him, as a Preservative of them against all Trouble, that *they might know the Love of God our Saviour, and be filled with Love to him.* Which Love made him suffer, and would make them do the same, and be contented with any Thing, that God thought fit to order for them. For true Love is so far from repining at the Hardships it endures, that it is rather glad to meet with such Things as may be Proofs and Demonstrations of its Sincerity and constant Fidelity; and will not suffer the Mind to be dejected; but like to Wine, to which it is compared, exhilarates the Spirit, cheers the Heart, and drives away Sorrow, as Fire doth Cold. It cannot be otherwise, if you consider in the Third Place, that there is,

1st. A Fulness of Piety and good Works, which the Holy Scriptures speak of, and which are as genuine and natural a Fruit of the Love of God and our Saviour, as that Love is the Fruit of the Divine Wisdom and Knowledge, which his infinite Charity hath imparted to us. Thus we read in *Acts. ix. 36.* of a Woman that was full of good Works: And that St. Paul was persuaded, the Romans were full of Goodness, *Rom. xv. 14.*

which may be interpreted, saith *Theophylact*; *ὁλοκληρὸν τὴν ἀρετὴν*, all Manner of Virtue, or compleat Piety in every Part belonging to it. According to that also, *Philip. i. i. filled with the Fruits of Righteousness*. And so necessary is the Exercise of all Christian Virtues, to give us this Fulness and Content in our Hearts, that the same Apostle joins these Two together, *1 Tim. vi. 6.* when he saith, that *Godliness with Contentment is great Gain*.

Wicked Men and Hypocrites can never have any true and durable Satisfaction in their Souls. That is, they that neglect all Christian Duties, or they that neglect some, and are lame in their Obedience, will ever be wanting something to make them Possessors of this Happiness. If a Man want any Christian Virtue, he will have other Wants, which will give him Disturbance: If he be either voluptuous, or proud, or covetous, or malicious; or if he be none of these, but lead a Life thus far unblameable, and yet hath no Converse with God by constant Prayer and Meditation, by Praise and Thanksgiving, and maintains not a lively Sense of the Life to come; he will find himself miserable at one Time or other, either for not having, or for losing some worldly Thing.

Heathens themselves were sensible of this; which made *Plato*, as *Clemens Alexandrinus* observes, define *ὁδὸς αἰσιν*, or Happiness, to be nothing else but as the Words of which it is compounded, imports, *τὸ εὖ ἔχειν τὸ δαίμονα*, to have a Man's Soul in good Plight. For *Demon*, saith he, or *Genius*, is *τὸ δὲ ψυχῆς ἡμῶν ἡγεμονικόν*,

that directive and guiding Principle in us, which steers every Man's Soul; and when it holds a right Course makes him happy. And so a nameless Author in *Suida* explains it, *ὁ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔχων ὁ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔχων* a good and virtuous Man is happy; for the very Name of Happiness plainly denotes, the having of a Man's *Damon* in good Case; now if that be every Man's own Soul, then he is *Eudemon*, or happy, whose Soul is well. And no Man's Soul is well, as it ought to be, but his who is good and virtuous; therefore that's the Man alone who is happy.

For *Quæ Conditiō rerum eadem ē hominum*, as *Seneca* writes; Such as the Condition of Things is, such is the Condition of Men. Now that's a good Ship, not which is finely gilded or carved, or which is laden with Rich and Royal Treasure; but which is firm and stable, whose Parts are closely joined together, so that it will admit no Water; which swims well in the Sea, and obeys the Rudder, and can bear up against the Wind. In like manner, you call that a good Sword, not which hangs in a Golden Belt, or whose Hilt or Scabbard is distinguished with Jewels; but which is sharp and strong, able to defend a Man against his Enemy. The like Definition you must give of a Man that is good for any thing. It is not one that is wealthy, and dwells in a fine House, and walks in pleasant Gardens (though these are Conveniencies and Ornaments of Life,) but he that is firm and strong, like the Ship I spoke of, by virtuous Principles; that is obedient to clear Reason;

whereby he is to steer his Course; that can bear up against a Storm; and is so compact and all of a piece, that nothing can enter to endanger his Safety. This Man's Happiness depends on God, and on himself. And as long as he adheres to God, and is compleatly furnished with those Divine Qualities which perfect his Blessed Nature; it is not in the Power of other Things to make him miserable. For he is as he should be, his Soul is in good Condition, and therefore he is happy. But he must take great heed of any Flaw in his Goodness; any Insincerity and Loathsomeness to comply with the Divine Will in some Parts of his Duty: For this will discompose and disorder him, whensoever he reflects upon it. And then most of all, when he will most wish to be quiet and at Ease; in Time of any outward Trouble or Danger, when he will be sure to have this Addition to his Affliction, that he hath been false to God, and a partial Lover of Virtue. And therefore the Apostle, you see, uses a Word, which comprehends every Kind of Virtue, when he speaks of the State and Condition of Christian Spirits, whom he would have filled with the Fruits of Righteousness. Not only one Sort of good Fruit, but all must grow in their Hearts: And these must not remain neither in their green and tender Age, but come to their full Bigness; and then they will certainly bring forth Abundance of Contentment, and make us live in perpetual Peace.

For, *first*, A Man's Heart being full of these, there will be ever some or other of them to be

exer-

exercised, which will not give him Leisure to be troubled and vexed. And 2^{dly}, The Exercise of every one of them, is the subduing or moderating of some Passion, Affection, Desire or other, which is the Cause of his Discontent. Let us apply our selves then, to the serious and constant Exercise of having Consciences void of Offence towards God, and towards all Men. Upon which depends,

4. A Fulness of Hope, which flows likewise from the former: It being the Promise that Christ hath made to those that love him and obey him, that they shall live with him eternally. This Promise is so certainly true, that if we be filled with all Goodness, and the Fruits of the Spirit, then we may have a *full Assurance of Hope* also, which these *Hebrews* are exhorted to *hold fast unto the End*, Chap. vi. 11. And what is there, that can give our Souls a greater Fulness? What will more effectually exclude all Sense of Want and Emptiness, than the full Assurance of Hope, which our Lord hath wrought in us? This is Riches enough; this is a vast Treasure, when the Heart is big with it, and on very good Reasons persuaded, that this Hope of Eternal Bliss will not make it ashamed. What can it desire more, what can it long for, but only to be filled more and more with this good Hope, through the Grace of God in Christ Jesus? The Sails of a Ship are not more swelled with a fresh Gale of Wind, nor the Channels of Water more raised at full Sea, nor the Air more full of Light when the Sun shines, than that Soul is

filled, satisfied, and, as it were, swoln with inward Comfort, which feels these good Hopes in God grow strong within it, and earnestly expects the Glory of the Lord Jesus. There is room then for no other Desire, but only that it may have a greater Fulness, as I said, of this Blessed Hope: And so it shall, by the means of that Grace, which first introduced it. For you may observe, what a Connexion there is between all these Things, and how they are interwoven one with another. A Sense of Christ's great Love to us, and a Sense of our true Love and Dutifulness towards him, begets Hope in us. This Hope doth exceedingly cheer and refresh the Heart: And this again begets more Love to our Lord, and makes us more constant in every good Work; which will again be the Nurse of Hope, and more abundant Comfort. Read those Words of the Apostle, *2 Thes. ii. 16, 17. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even the Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting Consolation, and good Hope through Grace; comfort your Hearts, and establish you in every good Word and Work.*

Where you see, the Love of God is the Fountain of our Hope; and the God of Hope (*i. e.* who hath given us good Hope) is he that comforts Christian Souls, and also establishes them in Obedience to him: And consequently Obedience being confirmed, Hope must needs receive a new Stability therewith. For he that doth so much to make us obedient, cannot fail, we may think, to do more, when we are such

as he would make us. He will take a Delight in what he himself hath wrought, and perfect his own Image, not only in Wisdom and Goodness, but in Bliss and Happiness. And indeed, besides all this, there is,

5. A Fulness of Joy which the Scripture speaks of, *Job. xvi. 24. Hitherto have you asked nothing in my Name: Ask, and you shall receive, that your Joy may be full.* The Joy that they had since Christ was revealed, exceeded all that was before: But after he went to Heaven, and was possessed of his Throne, and became the Lord of all; it arose to a greater Height, and filled the Souls of those who believed on him, with sweeter and more abundant Consolation. And this Joy arose out of the former Things which I have mentioned, and several other Causes. As, 1st, From the Fulness of Wisdom and Understanding, which was communicated to them, according to that Passage of St. *John, 1. Epist. Chap. 1. 4. These things write I unto you, that your Joy may be full; i. e. Those Things which they had seen, and heard, and handled of the Word of Life; those Things which they were sure and certain of by their very Senses, the Apostles gave Notice of to others, that they might have the fuller Joy in Christ Jesus.* There is an extraordinary Delight, which the Mind takes in Knowledge: But as much as the Knowledge of Christ exceeds all others, with so much greater Pleasure must it needs ravish the Understanding of those in whom it is. It is impossible but their Spirits should overflow with Joy, when
they

they reflect upon the Glory in which our Lord sits, and the Power he hath with God, and his tender Compassion to all his Subjects, with all the rest that I have already touched, but would require a Volume to explain so fully as the Matter deserves. Let it suffice briefly to tell you,

2^{dly}, That from our hearty Love to God and our Saviour, there flows a great Joy and Consolation of Spirit. Do but remember those Words I quoted before, *Colos. ii. 2.* where the Apostle prays, *their Hearts may be comforted, being knit together in Love*: And you will conclude, that if the Love they had one to another (of which he there speaks) was so sweet; then Love to God, which is produced, as well as the other, from the great Love to us, must be of a far better Relish, and yield a more delicious Joy to those, whose Hearts are not Strangers to it. And,

3^{dly}, From Piety also there arises much Joy; as you may collect from those Words, *Acts ix. 31.* *Then had the Churches rest through all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the Fear of God, and the Comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.* The Comfort, you see, or Joy of the Holy Ghost, was a Companion of walking in the Fear of the Lord.

Hope also, 4^{thly}, is another Spring from whence it flows. *Rom. xv. 13.* *Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope, &c.* Where you see, that God who hath given us good Hope, doth

doth by that very Name send great Joy into faithful Souls. And then this Joy causes them still more to abound in Hope: It being the Beginning of that which they hoped for. The like you read in the Place before-mentioned, *2 Thes. ii. 16.* He hath given us everlasting Consolation, and good Hope through Grace. Where the last Phrase explains the first, telling us that good Hope is the Cause of never-failing Consolation.

It arises also, 5thly, from the Good which we behold in others; from their Repentance, or Increase in Piety. For if there be Joy in Heaven among the Angels of God, at the Conversion of a Sinner; sure there will be some Joy on Earth, on such an Occasion, among them who are more immediately concern'd in it. And no less Joy is there, at the Progress they behold one another make in Piety and Good Works: According as the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, *2 Cor. vii. 4.* Great is my glorying in you; I am filled with Comfort; and am exceeding joyful in all our Tribulations. This afforded a Fulness of Contentment to him, that he heard of their great Hatred of Sin; of their Indignation, of their Fear, of their vehement Desire, and of their Zeal; as you read *v. 11.* which bred a great Joy in Titus also. And in his Joy, the Apostle again conceived a new Satisfaction, and rejoiced more than he did before, *v. 13.* Therefore we were comforted in your Comfort; yea, and the more exceedingly joyed we in the Joy of Titus, because his Spirit
I was

was refreshed by you all. This is a great Fulness of Joy, that is made bigger by the Increase of Joy to any body else. Great Satisfaction is in the midst of good Hearts, who feel themselves the better for the Satisfaction and Consolation that others receive.

And, 6^{thly}, This Joy is helped forward likewise by the Ministers of Christ ; who open the Gospel, and declare the Sense and Meaning of it ; who are ready to advise, and to administer Comfort and Counsel to those who are in need of it. Which made St. John say, 2 Epist. 12, that he would *write no farther, trusting to speak to them face to face ; that their Joy might be full.* By having his Presence, that is, with them ; to satisfy them in any Doubt ; to encourage them in their Conflicts ; to confirm them in their Faith ; to stir up their Love to God and their Brethren ; by giving them a clearer Sight of all those Things, which God had revealed to the Apostles by his Holy Spirit.

You see then, that Christianity teaches us to be more than contented ; even to *rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again, saith the Apostle, I bid you rejoice,* Phil. iv. 4. There is great Cause for it : We may be so satisfied, as to be pleased ; and rest so contented in our present Condition, as not to be without Delight ; If we know what God is ; and what our Lord is ; and what he hath done for us already ; and what he hath still promised to do : And if we love God, and be sensible of his transcendent
and

and inconceivable Love to us. If we have any Goodness in us, nay, any good Nature towards him who hath so loved us; we cannot repine and murmur, (as you shall hear next Time) nor bring any Complaints against his Providence, as if he dealt hardly with us; especially since he hath sent the Holy Ghost to confirm our Hope, and to make us *rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.*

P R A Y E R I.

O God, who hast not only endued me with Principles of Reason, and made me understand that thou art the Sovereign Lord, who orderest all Things as thou pleasest; but also made me Partaker of a Glorious Revelation of thy Mind and Will in Christ Jesus; by which I understand that thou art our Father, and hast a most tender Affection to us, and delightest to order all Things with the most merciful Regard to our Good and Happiness: I cast down my self most humbly before thee; adoring, blessing and praising thy Divine Goodness, with a thankful Heart, which hath taken such Care for our Everlasting Salvation, and likewise for our present Satisfaction and Contentment in every State and Condition of Life. How much do we owe thee, who hast open'd to us thy Secrets, and admitted us into thy Counsels;
and

and promised us such Things, as never enter'd into the Heart of Man to wish; and given us such Assurance, that it is thy Intentions we should live with Jesus, and reign with him in his Eternal Kingdom? And yet thou expectest no Requital for this great Bounty; but only that we would believe thee, and love thee, and be made like thee, and place our Hope in thee; and rejoice evermore in the Holy Comfort of this Faith, and Love, and good Hope, which thou hast given us by Christ Jesus. O God, what new Obligations are these, which thou layest on us; that after thou hast done so much for us, thou askest nothing of us, but that we would be contented; and art well pleased, if we be but pleased and satisfied with thy Bounty and Liberality towards us? There is infinite Reason, that we should be more than well pleased and contented: We ought to rejoice, and be exceeding glad in thee, who hast appeared to us in Christ Jesus, the Brightness of thy Glory, and the express Image of thy Person; by whom thou hast given us the Title of thy Children, and made us the Companions and the Care of thy Holy Angels; and promoted us to be Heirs of thy Glory; and given us the Holy Spirit, for an Earnest of the Immortal Inheritance. O fill my Mind with the Knowledge of thy Will, in all Wisdom and Spiritual Understanding: Fill me with a Sense of thy marvellous Love; and inspire my Will with the most ardent Love back again to thee. Fill me with all the Fruits of the Spirit, that they may be in me, and abound; so that I may abound in Hope, and be filled with all Joy in believing. O
that

that my Heart may be so possess'd with this Heavenly Wisdom, Love, Goodness, Hope and Joy in the Holy Ghost; that discontented and troubled Thoughts may never find any Place there; but I may rather in every thing give Thanks, and employ my Time in meditating on thy Mercies; and think I can never enough praise and acknowledge thy Grace towards me, (tho' I should do nothing else,) in calling me to be so happy, and intending to make me everlastingly blessed. Dispel all the Clouds of Darknes, Melancholy and Sadness, that at any time overcast my Mind, by the Brightness of this Celestial Light shining perpetually there: And preserve it in its full Strength and Power, that they may never return again; but I may rejoice in our Lord alway, and be still praising thee, whose Mercy endureth for ever. Yea, give me the Grace to rejoice in the Good of others, as if it were my own; especially in their Spiritual Welfare, and Growth in Godliness; and to make a good Use of all the Instructions, Counsels and Exhortations of thy Ministers; that they may be Helpers forward of my Joy, and we may all rejoice in the Day of Christ, to find that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord. Now to him who is able to make all Grace abound towards us; that we always, having all Sufficiency in all Things, may abound in every good Work; be Glorified, Honour, Thanksgiving and Praise, by Christ Jesus, throughout all Generations. Amen.

forming no Opinion of them; to as not to as-
 judgement about all Things whatsoever
 and live and do good against them. S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

H E B. XIII. 5.

--- Be content with such Things as ye
have : ---

I T hath ever been the Study of all Mankind, how to attain Satisfaction of Mind, and Contentment of Spirit, as the most desirable Good on which they could set their Hearts. There is no other End of all Mens Thoughts and restless Contrivances, of all their Labours and busy Endeavours, but only this; That at last they may be quiet, and come to rest. The *Scepticks* themselves, who were thought of all Men the most unreasonable, have left this Testimony of their Philosophy, that it designed nothing else but this: Which they imagined could not be compassed, but by suspending their Judgments about all Things whatsoever, and forming no Opinion of them; so as not to account some Things good and others evil, as we do,

do, but to forbear to pronounce any Sentence at all concerning them. So Sextus tells us in these Words: *The End of the Scepticks we affirm to be,* * *καὶ ἐν τοῖς κατὰ δόξαν ἀταραξίαν,* *an untroubled State of Mind, about all those things which fall under our Opinion; καὶ ἐν τοῖς κατὰ νύμφαν ποτεροπαθίαν,* *and in those things we are necessitated to suffer a Moderation of our Passions, and patient enduring of them.* For though it be impossible for any Man to be wholly free from Molestation, but Cold, Hunger, Thirst, and such like things, will pinch him; yet the Scepticks forbearing to make any Opinion of those Things, as the rest of the World do, suffer them with a more equal Mind, than they who account them such great Evils. Thus he. Which I mention to show, that tho' Men differ never so widely from the Sense of the whole World in other Things; yet they agree in this, That they would not be troubled and disturbed; and study by the most contrary Means to come to the same End that their Neighbours seek, Repose and Tranquillity of Spirit.

Now Emptiness and Want of something that we desire, being the common Cause of our Disquiet; I have begun to show, that there is such a Fulness of Divine Blessings, which our Saviour hath bestowed on us, as may very well be sufficient for our Satisfaction, and make us obey this Apostolical Exhortation, *to be content with such Things as we have,* or with our present

* Lib. 1. Pyr. Hypor. cap. 12.

Condition; if we will not refuse to receive it, nor shut it out of our Hearts.

For thus, you know, I described the Nature of Christian Contentment: That it is such a Fulness in our Souls, as makes us so well pleased in the Condition wherein we are, that we do not suffer the Desire of a Change to trouble our Spirit, or discompose our Duty. Every Word in this Description is worthy to be considered; and therefore I resolved to take it in Pieces, and set before you, by Parts, this Lesson, which the Apostle himself, he tells us elsewhere, had learned, and here endeavours to teach others.

I began with the first Word, and declared, as far as I cou'd at once, wherein that *Fulness consists*, which will make us say, as St. Philip did to our Saviour, *ἀρκεῖ, it sufficeth*.

And I shewed you, (1.) What a Fulness there is of Divine Wisdom and Heavenly Knowledge, wherewith our Lord has replenished us. And (2.) What a Fulness of Love, called by the Apostle *the Fulness of God*, this is apt to inspire us withal. And (3.) How this makes us to abound in good Works, and to be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness. (4.) What Fulness of Hope also, and (5.) Fulness of Joy, which springs from several Heads, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ hath communicated to all those who understand, and believe, and obey his Holy Gospel.

6. There is a *Sixth* Thing remaining to compleat this Fulness, which we also find there mentioned, arising from the Society and sweet

Converse that we have with good People, especially with good Friends; who add very much to the Contentment of Life, be our Condition what it will. *St. Paul* intending to make a Visit to the *Roman* Christians in his Way to *Spain*, and to stay a-while with them, could not better express the passionate Desire he had to enjoy them, and the Pleasure it wou'd be to him, than by saying that he hoped *first* (before he left them) *to be somewhat filled with their Company*, *Rom. xv. 24.* The little Time he had to spend among them, he promised himself wou'd give him no little Contentment: And though he could not enjoy them so long as he wish'd, yet he should go to *Spain* the better satisfied, for being filled, in part, with their Company at *Rome*.

And truly it is a great Satisfaction, which the Company of those we love is wont to yield us. The very Remembrance of them is so delightful, that *Gregory Nazianzen* doubts not to say, that this is *ἡ εὐτυχία καὶ ἀποκρίσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, *hysu iugachutos*, the very utmost Bound and Term of Human Felicity; or, if you will call it so, of the Blessedness of this Life. Nature it self most strongly inclines all Creatures to it, as *Aristotle* observes; there being no Beasts of the Earth, or Fowls of the Air, or Fishes of the Sea, no living Creatures, whether Wild or Tame, but take a kind of Contentment to be with others of the like Kind with themselves. And

* Epist. 71. ad Posthum.

therefore Mankind must be much more inclin'd to Society, because, if it be such as it shoud, its Pleasure is not without great Profit; and all the Pleasure of other Things would lose much of its Sweetness, if it was without this. For no Man would chuse to abound in all Kind of Wealth and Delight that is in the World, and be tied withal to love no body, nor be loved of any.

If we had therefore nothing else but this, in which we are so much pleased, it might serve to ease us in many Cases, and rid us of the Trouble of many Thoughts which else would molest us, and supply the Absence of divers Things, the Want of which is apt to discompose us. The very Sight of the Countenance of our Friends; is sometimes able alone to scatter a Cloud that was upon our Spirit; their Words are healing Medicines; their Kindness and hearty Love is a reviving Cordial; their zealous Concernment for our Good, puts Life and Vigor into us; and their fervent Desires for our Happiness, adds Strength to our Hopes, and is able to recover them out of a Swooning Fit.

Now if this have so much Power naturally and alone, then added to all the rest that I have already mentioned, and as it is refined by Christ Jesus, it cannot fail to compleat our Contentment as much as this World will allow. For that Wisdom, that Love, that Piety, that Holy Hope and Joy in our Lord, which tempers and sweetens all the Passions of the Soul, render those in whom they are, the most Excellent, the most

most Useful, and the most Unchangeable Friends. And if Friendship be the very Salt of Life (as Wise Men have said) without which it wou'd be nauseous and unsavoury; then nothing could design us a greater Benefit, and project to give a greater Relish to all the Enjoyments (and Miseries too) of Life, than Christian Religion: Which intended to make all that believe on Christ our Friends, and incline them to embrace us with the Love of Brethren and Sisters, or as the Members of the same Body do one another. And though Christianity hath not obtained this happy End, yet look how many good and truly virtuous Souls there are, so many Well-willers you have to pray for you, to pity you, to relieve you, to assist you with their Counsel, and all other ways that are in their Power. For ** φίλοι πάντες ἀλλήλων ἡ συγγενεῖς οἱ κατὰ θεὸν ζῶντες ἡ καὶ αὐτῷ εὐαγγελίῳ σοι χεῖντες*, (as the same Greg. Naz. speaks) *they are all Friends and Kindred to each other, who live according to God, and walk after the Rule of the same Gospel.* And the nearer and stricter Friendship we contract with any of these, still the more happy we are; because they will be the more concerned for us, and have the dearer and tenderer Affection to us in all our Needs. And what is there that hinders us from so doing? It being no Injustice to the rest, to have a more than ordinary Kindness for some. † *Τὸ δεῖν δικαιοσύνην*, as the aforesaid Great Man speaks in another Place;

* Epist. 43. ad Greg. Nyss.

† Epist. 47. ad Greg.

What is there more just and righteous than God? And yet, though he be the Maker and Lord of all alike, he was pleased to chuse unto himself a peculiar People out of the rest of Mankind, and named them Israel; and was not afraid that he should be therefore accounted unjust or unequal.

Abraham had the Title of the Friend of God, without any Injury to any body else. And he that had Abraham for his Friend, was not without a choice and peculiar Good, that would add much to his Contentment and Satisfaction, and make him a better Neighbour also to the rest of the World.

It is impossible he should be poor, who hath any Store of these Riches. Ob hoc ipsum vivo tranquillius, &c. saith Erasmus: For the Sake of this very Thing, I live in the greater Tranquillity; because I take that to be among my Goods, which my sincere Friends possess. I can never imagine my self destitute, as long as I have any of these remaining. There is no Possession more precious than this; in which, above all other Things in the World, I acquiesce; and comfort my self against all the Croakings of the Frogs. Nay, sometimes in one Person Christians find a great Treasure; who will help to illuminate their Mind with his Knowledge, and warm their Spirit by the Ardency of his Love to God, and comfort them (as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. i. 4.) when they are in Trouble, by the Comforts wherewith he himself was comforted of God,*

* Lib. 27. Ep. 7.

and quicken them by his pious Example, and holy Conversation; and be a Helper forward of their Joy in the Lord, by the Taste he hath that the Lord is gracious. So that all the forenamed Benefits may receive an Augmentation and great Increase from this. For we never receive any thing more readily, than from the Mouth of those whom we love; we are apt to suck in their Opinions, to imitate their Actions, to follow their Inclinations, to espouse their Interests, to be concerned in all their Designs; and, in short, to become like them. The Unity therefore of Christian Minds (as one of the Ancients speaks) makes a Man greater and more than himself; ὁ ὅς ἐστι πολλοῦ ὅτι ἑστιν ἑστις: For by this means one is multiplied into many. If Two or Ten be *ἑνὸς νοῦ*, of one Soul, and one Mind, as it is said of the first Christians, *Acts iv. 32.* One of these is no longer One, but every One of them becomes Ten. In these Ten, you will find One; and in every One, Ten. If there be any Enemy that spites One of them, he hath Ten to assault, and not One single Person. If he be in any Need, he is not oppressed thereby, as long as the Fulness of the greater Part remains; which will remove it, and take it away. Every one of these (as he proceeds) hath Twenty Hands, and Twenty Eyes, and as many Feet, and Half as many Souls: For he doth not use his own Soul only, but theirs also. Their Wisdom, their Prudence and Foresight, their Strength, their Diligence, their Zeal, are all his. That which Nature cannot do, Charity effects

after an admirable Manner. Therefore it were better the Sun should be extinguished, than the World be deprived of Christian Friendship; for many seeing the Sun, have inward Darkness and Sadness: But they that have Christian Friends, cannot but receive some Comfort. Nothing, nothing is more sweet than this Charity. For what will not a genuine Friend do for you? What Pleasure, what Profit, what Safety and Security is there, that he doth not afford you? If you tell me (as he still adds) of Thousands of Jewels, they will not be found comparable to this that I have named. Which made *Alexander* himself, when one ask'd him, *πῶς τὰς σπουδὰς ἔχεις?* *Where are thy Treasures?* point him to his Friends, and say, *There they are. I have none greater than those.* We have the rest, if we have these; and whatsoever we have of other Things, it is for these. According to that memorable Saying of *Antiphanes*, an Ancient Poet, recorded by *Athenæus* in these Terms, * *τὸ γὰρ πᾶσι ἅλλῃς, &c.* To what other Purpose, for God's Sake, is it, that a Man desires to be rich, and to abound in Money and Wealth; but that he may be able to help and succour his Friends, and sow the Fruit of Charity, the sweetest of all the Goddesses? So they loved to speak in those Days, till the Knowledge of one God was multiplied; when *St. John* better declared his Mind in the like Words, saying, *God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth*

in God; and God in him; in John. i. 16. And if he be inhabited by so Glorious a Guest; how is it possible that he should want Contentment in the Absence of many other Things; which the Divine Love may think fit to deny, but cannot envy to any, especially to his Friends? He bids them be of cheer; for all is well as long as he lives in them; whether they be full, or whether they be empty of other Things. If they be full, the Divine Love bids them empty themselves into others; if they be empty, it bids others fill and supply them.

v. 7. And to all this it may be added, that in those Days when the Apostles writ, there was a Fulness of the Spirit; many rare Gifts, which marvellously comforted the Hearts of those in whom they were; and caus'd great Joy to those that felt the happy Effects of them in their Souls, or in their Bodies. *Be filled with the Spirit*, (saith St. Paul, Ephes. v. 18.) *singing to your selves in Psalms and Hymns*, &c. And these two, I observe, are join'd together, *Act. xv. 52.* the Disciples being *filled with Joy, and with the Holy Ghost*. It strangely ravish'd their Hearts, to feel themselves so transform'd, and suddenly rais'd so much above themselves, in Wisdom, Power, and Largeness of Soul, by this Power from on high which came upon them. And tho' we do not partake of the like Miraculous Gifts, yet this is a great Satisfaction of Heart to every one of us; that we have a full Assurance of this Spirit to be our Helper, in seeking the Knowledge of our Saviour, in doing what

what he requires of us; in furthering our Joy, and rejoicing in him; in inspiring us with the Love of God and Virtue, and lending us Strength from above to compleat our Christian Piety, by making even *Patience* *hate* *his* *perfect* *Work*; *that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

And therefore, when the Apostle had said, that he had learnt in every Condition to be content, Phil. iv. 12. he immediately adds, as if he would give the Reason of it, v. 13. *I can do all Things, thro' Christ which strengtheneth me.* No wonder that I can endure Poverty, Hunger, and such like Things, as well as enjoy Plenty, and Abundance of Riches, if God please: The Power of Christ is in me; and by his Strength, I am sufficient for all Conditions of Life. The same Spirit and Power he hath promised to give to those that ask him; which will assist us in the obtaining and keeping of all this Divine Fulness which I have spoken of; and doth therefore add a greater Fulness and Sufficiency to us, than we could otherwise hope for, if we were left to our selves.

Now let us review briefly what hath been said, and behold how full the Gospel makes the Souls of those that entertain it. Here is Knowledge, or Faith; and here is Love; and here are the Fruits of Righteousness; and Hope; and Joy, of divers Sorts; and good Company; and the Spirit of God: Which are all, sure, able to give us great Satisfaction. Especially, which is chiefly to be consider'd, since there is a Fulness,

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an Abundance of every one of these. They therefore, who are possess'd with them all, and with the Fulness of them, can have no Space left, one would think, to give Entertainment to any Thing else: At least, these must be the prevailing and ruling Party, which will have the Command of every Thing beside that comes there. There can be no great Vanities, or empty Places remaining, where a Mind is furnish'd with so many Goods, and with such Plenty also of them. Whatsoever else is received there, must lye (as I may say) together with them, and so be dispos'd by them, according to their Order. And they will forbid, sure, any Tumults to be rais'd, or instantly quell them; as inconsistent with their sweet and peaceable Disposition.

That's the next Thing, in the Description of Contentment; which I shall but briefly touch. For having spoken so largely of the first, from whence I told you the rest would naturally issue; there remains the less to be spoken of that which still follows: *Viz.*

Secondly, A Quietness, Stillness and Rest in the Desires of the Soul; which, in a contented Man, prevent his still pushing forward to seek a Change. Where there is a Fulness, there will ever be some Rest. For what is there that we should violently move towards, when we have that which we used to run after; *viz.* Fulness and Satisfaction: When Things are full and weighty, they can make a stronger Resistance, than light and empty Things, to the Impulse of external

nal Objects. Now what Objects are there, weighty and strong enough, to move a Soul that is before possess'd with such Great and Massy Things, (as I have mention'd) to any one of which all the World cannot be compar'd? And as for internal Desires, when the Sharpness of the Appetite is allay'd by this full Satisfaction, they will no more vex and trouble our Minds, than the Stomach, when it is well satiated, is any longer prick'd and twitch'd by the Acrimony that is in it. All Longings are very much appeas'd in this Case; because we have what our Souls long for. All Desires come towards an End; because there are so few Wants that remain to be supplied.

But by Desires, I hope you think I mean not bare Wilhes of a Change, or Inclinations to it; no, nor those Motions which in Pursuance of our Inclinations we use, in a sober, pious, and submissive Diligence, to accomplish our just Ends; but those tumultuous and troublesome Appetites, which are perpetually stimulating us to such laborious Cares and Drudgery for the Things of this Life, as if they were our only or chief Good, or as if without so much of them as we wish for, we could not be at rest. Whatsoever is too toilsome, vexatious and irksome to our Souls, that ought to cease; and may, by this Fulness and Satisfaction which we have in Spiritual Goods, be quite taken away. If I should but instance in all the Fruits of Righteousness, where-with the Soul of a Christian is filled, you would soon see how they quiet all Desires; their very

ry Nature consisting in the Moderation of them. Whether it be Temperance, or Humility, or Meekness, or Charity, or Peaceableness, or Patience, or any other; they all bring our Souls to Rest and Stillness, and place it in a blessed Tranquility: As I may have Occasion to shew more fully hereafter.

3dly, Let me now add what follows from hence, and is Part of the Description of Contentment, That the Soul of such a Man is well pleased, and enjoys it self with some Chearfulness of Spirit. For where there is Rest, the Mind is well at Ease; and where there is a Fulness, it must needs be at Rest.

But that there may be no Mistake, and to use Words that cannot be misinterpreted; I said,

4thly, In Conclusion, That it is the Part of a contented Spirit, to do its Duty in one Condition as well as another. This is the chief Thing of all, to maintain such a Quiet, Peace, and Pleasantness of Mind, out of a Sense of that Fulness of Divine Blessings communicated to us, that in no case our Duty to God or Man be discomposed, or hinder'd. And particularly, there are these Christian Duties, which must never be disturb'd in a well-contented Mind.

1. We must *rejoice in the Lord alway*, which is the express Exhortation of the Apostle in that Chapter; where he speaks so much of his being perfectly contented, and well pleased in every State; *Phil. liv. 4.*

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2. We must be ever ready to pray to God. And, *whenever* to *conscience* *and* *reason* *W*

3. To give him Thanks, and praise him in all Conditions. According to what you there read in the following Verses. For when he had said, *v. 5. Let your Moderation (i. e. your Equality of Mind, and mild Temper of Spirit) be known unto all Men; he adds, Be careful for nothing, v. 6. but in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Request be made known unto God.* He is certainly very much out of Order, who complains more of what he wants, than thanks God for what he enjoys. And still he is more distemper'd, that can tell his Wants to others, better than to God; and desires worldly Things so much, that he is unfit to desire Spiritual. And that is the

4. Next, We ought to live without perpetual Carefulness, and Fear of Want. So my Text saith, *Let your Conversation be without Covetousness.* We must not be so greedy of the Things of this World, as if we thought there is no living without such a Proportion of Riches, as we fancy to our selves; but thank God for what we have already, and without Sollicitude and Fear follow the Business of our Calling, and not neglecting those other Duties. And

5. If Things succeed not according as we expect, or as they were wont, we ought not to let Grief and Dejection of Spirit hinder our Performances of those Duties. And on the other side,

6. If they do, we must be sure to be charitable to others ; which is a Means that God hath provided for their Content. For this is a sure Rule : *He is not yet full enough, who hath nothing to spare.* His Heart is straiten'd ; it is plain ; else he would communicate out of his Fullness, to his poor Neighbour's Necessities. Again,

7. A contented Spirit will live without Envy of others ; which is a Sin that eats up our Souls, and gnaws and frets our Spirits with continual Torment, upon the Sight of others more flourishing Condition. Now how can there be any such Vice in an Heart that is full, and hath no room thus to chafe and grate (as I may say) upon it self ?

Nor will such a Spirit,

8. Be ambitious and aspiring to Great Things. The fuller any Thing is, the lower it lies, and the less apt it is to be heaved up. They are empty and vain Things, that are carried away with the Air, and lifted up with every Puff. A Bladder, indeed, may be blown about when it is full ; but it is because it is full only of Wind, like that which blows it away. And such is the Condition of all aspiring Spirits : They are lifted up by the Impulse of worldly Things ; which are just the same that they are filled withal already. If they were not possess'd with an Affection to them, but to better Things, they would not be so lifted up with them, when they enjoy them, nor lift up themselves so much to them, when they want them.

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We must be so well pleas'd also.

9. As to live without Murmuring and Repining at God's Providence; which was the Sin of the *Israelites*, mention'd in the Beginning. All the Complaining and Grumbings, as we may speak, that are in us, are when we are empty: The fuller we keep our selves, the freer we are commonly from their Molestation. The Bellowings which are heard in the Earth, in some Countries, are from the sulphurous and nitrous Exhalations, that are in the Caverns and hollow Places of it: If the Earth were full, there would be no such Roarings, frightful Noises and Convulsions, as tear it in pieces. Just so it is with the Soul of Man, which will be always sighing and groaning, and rending it self with vexatious Thoughts, if it be not full of those satisfying Goods, that are only able to prevent its having Uneasinesses to throw out.

To conclude all.

10. We must never take any unlawful Course, to bring our selves out of the Condition wherein we are. For he that can be at rest, to what Purpose should he trouble himself to remove from one Place to another; especially when he cannot do it without Injury to the Rules of Conscience, in the Observance of which consists our Peace? If we be unquiet, always in Agitation, desirous to shift our Condition, be it how it will; it is a sign we are discontented People; and not such good Christians, as, perhaps, we pretend, and seem to our selves to be.

Thus

Thus I have done with the first Thing I propounded, which was to show what Contentment is. Before I come to the other, it will be useful to make some Inferences from what hath been said.

I. And First, let me represent unto you from the precedent Discourses, the great Goodness of Almighty God to Mankind; which appears in these Four Considerations.

First, In that he gives us what he requires. He bids us be contented; and you see he furnishes us with all Means imaginable so to be. He doth not exact of us over hard Tasks, and too difficult Labours: But he first lays light Burdens on our Shoulders, and then gives us Strength and Power to bear them. O! how easy is it to be contented with such Things as we have, when we have no less than himself, than his Son, than the Comforts of his Spirit, than the Promises of Heaven, than the Beginnings of eternal Joy; and, in one word, no less than all things whatsoever, which are made ours by Christ Jesus?

Secondly, His Goodness is most visible and apparent, in that he gives such Satisfaction to all the Appetites that are about us. The Understanding he gratifies with the noblest Knowledge; the Will he satiates with the divinest Love; all the Affections are entertained with the Pleasures of Joy and Hope, which drown all Sorrow, and leave no Place for pale Fears and black Cares, or any other of those Passions which

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make our Lives miserable. He is not sparing in his Bounty to us. No, we cannot do him a greater Injury, than to think him so niggardly and parsimonious, that he would rather see us perish, than do us a Kindness. Eye never saw, Ear never heard, neither did it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive such Things as he hath now revealed unto us by the Gospel: As if Heaven studied to give us Content; if God, and his Son, and his Holy Spirit, and the Society of Angels, and the Friendship of good Men, be able (as sure they are) to afford it to us. But, *Thirdly*, His Goodness is in this most of all to be admired, that he hath given us better Satisfaction than we desire. We desire Satisfaction in the World, and he bestows it upon us in himself. We would have Abundance on the Earth, and he gives us Treasures in Heaven. We would fain enjoy always the Pleasures of the Body, and he ravishes us with the Pleasures of the Mind. We are greedy of the Riches of Gold and Silver, and he enriches us with Divine Wisdom, to which all the Wealth of the *Indies* is not to be compared. We seek for Contentment in living always in the Embraces of our dying Relations, and he invites us into the Eternal Embraces of the Lord of Life and Glory. We long for the Joys that crackle and make a Noise no longer than Thorns do under a Pot; and he imparts to us his own most solid Joys, and everlasting Consolation. We would fain satisfy our Thirst in these muddy and dirty Streams here below; and he drinks to us, if I may so speak, and would have

have us pledge him out of those pure *Rivers of Pleasure, that flow at his Right Hand for evermore.* Are we not much beholden to him? Doth he not do us a great Courtesy, in exchanging these lower Satisfactions for those that are so high, that they tend to equal us with the Angels? Sure we are much to blame, if we find Fault with him, shou'd he deny us any of these Earthly Contentments which we fancy, when it is out of pure Love to make us Partakers of infinitely greater. And,

Fourthly, Herein also his Goodness is to be noted, that he so gives us Ease from Trouble and Disquiet, as withal to give us Comfort and great Consolation. Those Things that content us, and quiet our Desires, do not merely assuage our Pain, but they fill us with Pleasure. They do not only allay our Grief, but bring us in Abundance of Joy. Whilst they still all evil Passions, they stir up those that are good. By expelling those Thoughts that trouble us, they settle in the room of them, such as are as full of Delight, as our Hearts are full of them. The Contentment I mean that he gives us, is not a mere Freedom from Disturbance, but a Possession of some Good; which introduces a real Sense of such Pleasures, as surmount all others, as much as God and Heaven surpass all the Earth.

II. Let us then, in the next place, consider the Excellence of Christianity, and what great Inducements there are to move the Heart of every one of us, to a sincere Affection towards

it. What Allurement can there be greater to any thing, than to the Life of Christ, which

First of all, brings us into the Possession of that, which our Souls most seek after; that is, to have enough? Is not this the Longing of every one of our Hearts, that we may be filled, and want nothing? Is it not for this that we toil Night and Day, to light somewhere upon Satisfaction and Contentment? Riches, Friends, Health, Honour, and all other such like things, we do not desire for themselves; but for the Ease, the Quiet, the Peace and Fulness which we hope they will bring along with them to our Souls. Now this is the Business of Christian Religion. This is the very Design of it, to put us into the Possession of that Thing, on which our Minds are so bent, that we can take no Rest for want of it; but are in an unwearied Pursuit, all our Life long, of its mere Shadow and Appearance. And this,

Secondly, Is a Favour which all the World cannot afford us. For when we have what we desire, we are still full of Desires. When the World shines upon us, and courts us as much as we do it; still we remain dissatisfied, and something or other vexes our Thoughts, till we come to repose them in the Love of God, and in an hearty Obedience to him, without which we cannot enjoy his Love. Why should any thing then in the World keep our Hearts from this, which all the World cannot give us without it? What Madness is it, to continue still in a Strangeness to our Saviour, out of a Love we bear to

any thing here ; when that which we love these Things for, they are unable to bestow upon us without his Love ? Consider also in the

Third place, That Christianity gives us this Satisfaction in a more excellent Manner than the World could do, were it in its Power to bless us with it. We seek for Ease and Quiet in the Enjoyment of these Things below, but Christianity gives us this Ease without their Enjoyment. The World promises us Contentment by possessing it ; and Godliness bestows Contentment upon us, though we want what others possess. And this sure is a nearer and shorter Way to Peace and Rest, than any other. Tho' we be without a Number of Things we fancy on Earth, yet without stirring one Foot toward the Attainment of them, we may be very happy, if we will but be Religious. The World we cannot have without a great deal of Pains ; and when we have it, it will not cease our Pains : Christianity saves us all this Labour, and brings us the Comfort we desire from the World, with no more Pain than seeking after it, and that at last will be a great Pleasure. When we have these Things, we feel not our selves well contented ; but by true Religion we feel our selves very well contented, though we have them not. This is its Excellency, that it can do more in the Absence of all Things, than they can do by their Presence. And that,

Fourthly, In all Conditions of Life. There is no Estate into which we can be cast, but still we shall find our selves at Ease, if we want not

this. If we be thrown on a sick bed, if our Friends be torn from us, if our Houses be rifled, if a Prison be our Habitation ; there much Contentment dwells, as well as in any other Place, if Christ do but dwell in our Hearts by Faith, and work in us by his Love. This may be the Spiritual Meaning of those Words, *Psal. lxxxi. 16.* in which God promises to satisfy *Israel with Honey out of the Rock.* As he made the most barren and stony Places of their Land fruitful, to yield Grass and Flowers, out of which the Bees should suck Honey : So now to all true *Israelites, in whom there is no Guile,* he makes Comforts sweeter than the Honey and the Honey-comb, to grow in that Condition, where, one wou'd think, there can be nothing but Bitterness, Misery, and Trouble. When we walk in stony Ways, and craggy Paths ; when we pass over Rocks and Flints that cut and wound our Feet, even the Blood that trickles down doth not want its Pleasure : It is no less precious than so many Drops of Balm, and yields us a Satisfaction greater than if we dipt our Feet in Oil, out of the Way of Christian Godliness.

III. See then the Reason why Men want Comfort : Even because they want Christian Virtue. This is the Root of all the Miseries that are in the World. Hence flow all our Complaints and doleful Lamentations. Yea, all the Disturbance that Men give others, as well as themselves, hath no other Original but only this, that they are defective in their Religion. They
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are in great Want of Heavenly Knowledge; their Souls are empty of the Love of God and our Saviour; they do not live in the Exercise of Piety, and have little or no Hope in God: And then they will easily want every Thing, yea, even those Things which they have; because all the World is not big enough to fill their Hearts, though it were all in their Arms.

IV. Need I tell you then, whither you are to go for Contentment? You see the Place, and the Way you know: Yes, and you cannot but feel your Hearts moved to walk in it, it is so pleasant. You must seek it in the Knowledge of Christ, which is a Light that arises to us in Darkness; making all the Spectres, Mormo's and terrible Bug-bears wherewith we affright our selves in the Night of Ignorance, to fly away. You must seek it in Heavenly Love, which is a Fire to thaw our benumbed and stupified Souls, and to make those Hearts that are as cold as a Stone, and ready to die in us, to revive into a chearful Flame. You must seek it in Hope of Glory, in the Joys of the Holy Ghost, in the Cup of Consolation that the Gospel reaches out to you; which is like to the richest Wines, refreshing our Spirits, and invigorating our Hearts, even when they are full of the Waters of *Marah*, or Bitterness, that are ready to overflow and drown them in Sorrow and Sadness. If you will seek it any where else, you must blame your selves that you have it not: But if you will seek it here, it will

never bear the Blame of not giving it to you in the largest Measure.

V. See here also the Greatness of the Sin of Discontent. It is a Disparagement to the Gospel; a foul Reproach either to the Knowledge of Christ, or to our selves, that we have no more of that Knowledge. If we do well to be unquiet, then our Saviour hath very ill provided for us, after all his Love and Care that he hath taken about us. If we think we do ill, then our Sin is the greater, seeing we have a Remedy so near at hand, and will not use it. But of this hereafter.

VI. Their Sin likewise, you see, rather than their Misery, is to be pitied, who will not be contented. For is not he a ridiculous Person that complains of Hunger, when he sits at a full Table, and will not put forth his Finger to touch a Bit? Or that sits by a River, and complains of Thirst, but does not vouchsafe to stoop for a Drop of that Water which runs by his Side? And yet such is the Case of those, who are ever tormenting themselves in their own Thoughts, and spend their Time in fruitless Complaints; and will not be at the Pains of a few Thoughts, to make use of those Comforts which offer themselves so plentifully to them, that they are sufficient for all the World. They are not sensible of their real Wants, and yet all the while they are troubled about Things which they do but fancy that they want; they are
still

still repining, and bewailing their Condition, while they shoud be studying to amend what is amiss, to learn Patience, and to furnish themselves with those Consolations which are proper to refresh them, and every where in the Gospel lie before them.

VII. What shall I say more? You are satisfied, I suppose, that he is a very bad Christian, and altogether unacquainted with the Gospel, who is covetous, continually aspiring, murmuring at his own Condition, and envying that of others; whose Thoughts for the World will not let him mind his Soul, and perform the Duty he owes to God; whose Love to any thing here, of which he is desirous, will at any Time make him lay aside his Respect to Religion, or utterly unfit him for the Practice of it. And yet, alas! this is the Condition of most Men, who are called by the Name of Christ. They say his Commands are impossible: They slander the Justice of his Government; and had rather charge him with Want of Wisdom and Goodness, in bidding us do Things that cannot be done, than become wise and good themselves by setting themselves seriously to do them. And all the Reason is, because they have no Acquaintance with the Gospel. Their Hearts are so engaged in other Projects, that they have no Leisure, or will be at no Pains, to understand and ponder it. If they would, they should find their Minds so full of Knowledge, and Love, and Hope, that they would be full of the Fruits of Righteousness also; and re-
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joice in being so happy beyond their Expectations. A little would suffice them of any thing; but only of those Joys, and of the good Hope which our Lord hath given us. They would be well pleased with the Want of any thing, but only of God's good Spirit, which they would pray for Day and Night.

VIII. Let me beseech you then, to *forsake the foolish, and live; and walk in the Way of Understanding*, as the Wise Man speaks, *Prov. ix. 6.* Deliver your selves presently out of the Number of those Fools, who are always seeking for that which they can never find; and, which is a worse Folly, are always groping for that which is just at hand, and which every body sees but themselves. The Word is nigh, that which speaks Contentment is in their very Mouth; and yet they love to fill their Mouths with Gravel, and break their Teeth with Pebble-Stones, when they have sweet and good Food which even salutes their Lips. The Fool which the *Italians* tell us of, *Santiccio* by Name, was not more gross and sottish than most of us, who all the Summer long did nothing but take Frogs and flea them; and then carried their Skins to the Currier, swearing the *Roman* Emperors never wore any thing so fine, and that Sables were not to be compared to them. We peepe Straws, we busy our selves about frivolous Things, we pester our Thoughts with a Number of idle Businessses, and spend the best of our Days in unprofitable Labours; when there is one easy, sweet, and
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S E R M O N II.

59

delightful Employment to which we will not put our Hands, nor bend our Thoughts, which is to know and do the Will of God. Let me prevail with you to mend this Folly, and to apply yourselves to this Heavenly Wisdom. Search and try, where can your Hearts find Contentment, but only here? Is not this the End, as I said, for which you desire Riches, Honours, and all things else, that you may be quiet and well pleased? Do you desire Abundance merely for the Love of it self? No Man is so foolish. He hath some further End in all that he designs, and desires, and doth. And is not this the Thing he aims at, that he may find Ease and Satisfaction of Mind after all his Labours? Doth he not seek every thing with Hopes to find this in it? But how much better would it be to seek that Ease and Satisfaction without these Things, if God deny them? To be able to live happily, and yet want them? This Contentment you cannot have in them; and yet it is possible to have it otherways (and all the Happiness of the World to come also) either with them or without them, if we will but look after it. O get your Minds filled then, and satisfied. This is all I beg of you: Let but your Hearts be filled; give them enough. But where is that Good which will fill them? It is not in Riches; Pleasures have it not; nor will Dignities and Honours prefer us to it. No, it lies in Divine Knowledge; in the Love of God and our Saviour; in the Joys and Comfort of the Holy Ghost; in Meekness, Mercifulness, Peaceableness, Purity, Humility, and such

such like Virtues. Be filled with those, and then you shall never be filled with that Trouble, Sadness, and Heaviness, which possesses the Rich and the Great, as well as other Men.

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## P R A Y E R II.

**O** God, who art the full and the filling Good; who satisfiest the Desire of every living Thing, and therefore wilt not refuse to answer the Desires of Immortal Spirits, whom thou hast made to know how good thou art, and to be satisfied with no less Good than thy self. Thou art ever pouring thy Benefits upon us; and sendest us every Day some new Token of thy Love, to make our Pilgrimage here upon Earth the more comfortable to us. But above all, thou art to be acknowledged in thy surpassing Love and Kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, by whom thou hast made the darkest Night of Trouble and Sorrow, not to be without the Light of Joy and Gladness. I thank thee, O God, for the great Satisfaction which thou hast given to all that is within us, which ought to bless thy Holy Name. For thou hast filled our Minds and Understandings with the highest Knowledge, and our Wills with the divinest Love, and all our Affections with the Comforts of Hope and Joy in thee our God, sufficient to swallow up all our Sadness, and Grief,  
and



and Fear, and Care, and all the troublesome Passions that are in our Hearts. O my God, how rich art thou in Mercy towards us, who providest that Contentment for us, which we seek and labour after in these lower Enjoyments, by leading us to thy self, the Fountain of all that Good which is in any Creature? How excellent is thy Loving-kindness; who when we desire much in this World, givest us an Immortal Inheritance in the other? And when our Hearts are set upon perishing Riches, invitest us to Treasures in the Heavens, and settest before us Eternal Honour and Glory with our Saviour? Besides all which, thou dost not deny me the Comfort of my Friends, Lovers, and Acquaintance; in whom I see likewise how full of Love thou art, and how ready to do us good. Thou wilt not cease thy self, I believe, to follow me with thy Loving-kindness all my Days, to take care of me, help and comfort me; who hast put such great good Will into the Hearts of Men.

My Soul doth magnify thee, O Lord; and my Spirit rejoiceth in thee, O God my Saviour. Particularly for that thou hast promised me thy Holy Spirit to strengthen and empower me to do my Duty faithfully to thee, and to increase in Wisdom, Charity, and Piety; that so I may rejoice in thee evermore. O that I may feel the Effect of these holy Thoughts and devout Acknowledgments, in the constant Stillness and Quietness of my Soul, whatsoever the Condition be, into which thou art pleased to bring me. Dispose my Heart to such an humble Confidence in thee, that I may be careful



ful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication make known my Request to thee, with Thanksgiving. Help me to have my Conversation without Covetousness, and to be content with such Things as I have. Let no Sollicitude for the future discompose my Duty, or disturb my present Enjoyment. Root out of my Heart all Distrust of thee, all Envy, Uncharitableness, Ambition, murmuring or repining at any of thy Providences, with every thing else that dishonours the Gospel of our Lord Jesus; and misbecomes the Christian Spirit. In all Events, give me Grace to acquiesce in thy Wisdom and Love; and to study rather how to mend my self, than how to mend my outward Estate. That having my Soul still more and more furnished with those Heavenly Goods where-with thou hast enriched us by Christ Jesus, I may lead every Day a more happy Life in this World, and be prepared for that perfect Satisfaction and Contentment, which we wait for in the World to come. Amen.



S E R.

## S E R M O N I I I.

T I M. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

**T**HREE Things, you know, were pro-  
pounded to be discussed in the En-  
trance of this Discourse about Con-  
tentment. First, What it is, and  
wherein this Virtue of Contentment consists.  
Secondly, What Reasons there are to enforce  
this Duty, and bind it upon us. And, Thirdly,  
By what Means we may compass it, and be made  
Masters of so great an Happiness.

In the handling of the First of these, I have  
laid open so much of the Mystery or Secret of  
Contentment, that you cannot but have a Pro-  
spect of the other Two. The Soul of a good  
Christian is so full of the most precious Treasures,  
that it cannot but be full of Satisfaction. There  
is such great Reason he should be well pleased,  
that one cannot see how he should be otherwise.

And

And how to get this Fulness, any one may learn, that will but consider a little what hath been said, and apply his Mind to the Study of the Gospel of Christ, which fills the Soul with all that can be desired to its Content.

II. But for your farther Satisfaction, I shall now begin to treat distinctly of the Second Thing; and show what a Fulness of Reason there is both in our own Mind (if we will use it) and also in the Word of God, to give us Contentment; that is, to make us well pleased in our present Condition, so as not to be too greedy of more than we have, nor inordinately to desire what is another Man's: But to thank God for what we possess, and to rejoice in him and in it. And that you may see there is a Fulness of Reason indeed, and not only in Word, let us consider these Six Things.

*First*, Our Selves.

*Secondly*, Other Men.

*Thirdly*, The Things we are discontented about.

*Fourthly*, The whole World.

*Fifthly*, God the Maker and Governor of it.

*Sixthly*, Our Lord, and all that have been his Followers. Every one of which will afford us abundant Matter of Satisfaction.

I. I begin with the First, the Consideration of our selves, the very best Piece of God's Workmanship here below, the prime Part of his Creation;



Creation; and shall make it appear, that there can be no Cause that we alone should be discontented and impatient, when all other Creatures are so quiet and well pleased in the Condition which God hath allotted to them.

In order to which, I desire that Exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy, which I have read to you, may be considered with the other before mentioned; *And having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content.* In which Words, he reminds him of the true End and Design of Christianity, which was not such as evil-minded Men, who only wore the Name of Christ, imagined; but directly opposite to their carnal Conceits. There were some, you must know, in the Church, who under the Notion of *Christian Liberty* (a Thing much spoken of in those Days, and deservedly challenged, being a Freedom from the Yoke of *Moses's Law*) laboured to set themselves free from all Subjection to their Masters, to whom by the Laws of the Country they were become Servants or Slaves. At least if they served Christian Masters, they fancied they were become their Equals, because they enjoyed the common Name of *Brethren*. That this pleasant Dream might not pass for Christian Doctrine, he first of all requires Timothy to possess all those who were under his Charge, with the quite contrary Persuasion: Commanding as many Servants *as were under the Yoke* (i. e. served Heathens) *to count their Masters worthy of all Honour, that the Name of God, and his Doctrine, might not be blasphemed,* (as if it countenanced

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the licentious Opinion of being absolved from their Obedience;) and that they who had believing Masters should not despise them, because they were Brethren; but rather do them Service, because they were faithful and beloved. These Things he bids him teach and exhort, Ver. 1, 2. And then,

Secondly, He proceeds to describe the Genius and Humour of those who had taught otherwise, (and perverted Mens Souls by that loose and pleasing Doctrine of Liberty;) which he doth in such a manner, as was sufficient to make any honest Man abhor them. Ver. 3, 4, 5. where he tells you these were their principal Qualities, *Pride, Ignorance, and Covetousness*; the Effect of which was, *Strife, Envy, Railings, evil Surmises*, perpetual Wranglings, and frivolous Disputes, with such like Mischiefs. But that which he concludes their Character withal, as most notorious, and upon which he intended to enlarge himself, is their Covetousness: *They supposed Gain to be Godliness*, so we render it. His Meaning is, they imagined Christian Religion (which is called by the Name of *Godliness*, because that's the Design of it) should promote their Worldly Interest. This Mistake made many Men of corrupt Minds (especially of the *Jewish Nation*) to profess Christianity; and was one Occasion of filling the Church with a Number of bad People. Servants hoped, as I said, to gain Liberty by it from their Masters, and Subjects from their Princes. And those Sophisters who vended their trifling Doctrines, hoped



ped to get Money, and raise Estates by putting off their pitiful Ware. In a word; Christ they hoped would make them rich and great Men in the World, because they heard of a Kingdom, and of being made Kings and Priests, to reign with him, and such like Things; which they construed to a Worldly Meaning.

Hence the Apostle takes Occasion to assert the true Intention and Scope of the Christian Religion, which was, first, to make Men godly and pious; and then to make them contented with a little of other Things, when they had obtained this End: Nay, to think themselves great Gainers, though they were poor, if by Christian Piety they had Hopes in Heaven. So it follows, *Ver. 6. But Godliness with Contentment is great Gain.* Whatsoever these Men fancy, Godliness it self is Riches enough, and teaches us to be contented with the Hopes it gives us. And then he shows there is a natural Reason for it, why Men should be contented with their Portion, and not affect great Things as the Worldly, Sensual Christians did: *Ver. 7. For we brought nothing into this World, &c.* We cannot have less than we were born withal; and since there is no Means, if we have never so much, to carry our Riches along with us to the next World; why should we not be satisfied with such a Portion, as is sufficient for our Use in this?

And then he concludes with this Inference, *And having Food and Raiment, let us be there-with content.* In which Words, he shows plainly what it is that we have use of in this Life; and



how little a Man may be contented withal, if he be godly: There is not much required to his further Satisfaction. If he be satisfied of the Divine Love and Grace to him by true Piety, all the rest may be comprehended in a few Words. If we have *Food and Raiment*, we need seek no further.

I. The First Thing then which I desire may be taken into your Consideration in order to your Contentment, is this, from whence the rest will easily and naturally follow, *That the Wants of our Bodies are very few*; and they are the Things for which Mens Thoughts are so tossed, and their Desires so swell, that they grow restless and troublesome to them. The Apostle, who was no ignorant, unexperienced Person, could find no more than *διατροφας*, Things for *Food and Nourishment*, and *σκευασματα*, Coverings; under which must be comprehended *Cloathing*, and *House-room*: These if he be furnished withal, he thought, in his Philosophy, a Christian might have a contented Mind; For he hath what he needs; God hath provided for his principal Concerns, according to that of the Son of Syrach, Eccles. xxix. 21. *The chief Things for Life are Water, and Bread, and Cloathing, and an House to cover Shame*. Look over the whole Man; ask every Part about you; they cannot bring you in any long Bills of their Wants; they cannot tell you of any Necessaries beyond these; nor will they complain, if these be constantly supplied. Is there any of us, that

can say we really want more than what is contained in these few Words? If there be some such Person that is so unhappy, I have something else afterward to say to him for his Satisfaction. But for the present it will be useful to us to consider, how few there are in the World that want Hands, and Feet, and Tongue, and Eyes, and the like excellent Things. If we were to seek these, I confess the Case would be something hard, because we know not where to find them: But since we are not put to such Shifts, we have great Cause to be thankful that we have those Things, for the Want of which we should have been so much troubled; and in the Use of which (through God's Blessing) we may attain likewise whatsoever we want, and is needful for us.

Why should we not be well contented, seeing we have such great Blessings from God, as will not let us want other necessary Things, if we please but to employ them? We have Arms to work withal, and commonly we have Health; and in the Use of these, no Man need be without so much as is needful for him.

Was not this the Condition of *St. Paul*, who notwithstanding enjoy'd full Content, as he himself relates? Did not he *labour with his Hands*, and provide his own Maintenance by a daily Industry? Did not he think himself rich enough, as long as he was able to work for his Living? Indeed he rejoices in the Love of the *Philippians*, who had been so kind as to make him a Present. He was glad they loved themselves so well, as to be charitable towards him. But he takes



great care to inform them, that he did not rejoice so much because they had made him rich, as because they had done their Duty, and were rich in good Works. *Not that I speak in respect of Want; (saith he, Phil. iv. 11.) for I have learnt in every State to be content, &c.* that is, I do not rejoice at this Care you have taken of me, which hath flourished again (as it is *Ver. 10.*) because I was careful how to live, and discontented in the Condition wherein I was before I received this Token of your Love: No, I thank God, I can satisfy my self in any Condition, and be happy when I am empty, as well as when I am full. *Notwithstanding, ye have done well, (Ver. 14.) that you have communicated with my Affliction.* It tends much to your Honour, that you would not have me poor; and it is an Act of Christian Charity, which gives me more Content than any thing you have, or could bestow upon me.

Suppose then, that you have but a small Portion of the Goods of this World; and suppose again, that you have many Children to provide for, and see but little Hope of leaving them any thing when you depart from them; consider with your selves, how much God hath blessed you and them withal before you were born; how he made you, and fashioned you wonderfully in your Mother's Womb; how he gave you there a comely Body; how he provided you with Abilities to provide for your selves, when he brought you into the World; and therefore be more thankful that you have those Things, and that



that you shall leave your Children possessed of them; than you are careful how to leave them Riches and Wealth, which are not so necessary for them, as those Things which you are like to leave them. *Health and a good Estate of Body are above all Gold,* (as the Son of Syrach excellently discourseth, *Ecclus. xxx. 15, 16.*) *and a strong Body above infinite Wealth. There is no Riches above a sound Body, and no Joy above the Joy of the Heart.* Whatsoever we want then, let us remember that commonly we have these, and that is more than all we want, if we were but thankful for it.

Before I leave this Particular, let me suggest these Three Things, among many other that might be represented to your Thoughts.

1<sup>st</sup>, That the Things which we have (as you have seen) are more than those which we have not. All our Senses, all the Members of our Bodies, all the Faculties and Powers of our Souls, which, blessed be God, we enjoy, are more in Number than the other Things which we do not enjoy. Shall we lose the Comfort of having these, by being troubled about other Matters which we have not, and perhaps need not, as you will presently discern, if Reason can be heard in its own Behalf? This is very unaccountable, and not to be endured. For,

2<sup>dly</sup>, Consider that the Things we naturally enjoy are of far greater Value, as well as more in Number, than those that we fancy we are in Need of to our Happiness. This is our Saviour's own Argument against Care and Discon-

tent, *Matt. vi. 25.* Is not the Life more than Meat; and the Body than Raiment? Take no Thought therefore for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on. Hath not God bestowed upon you that which is a great deal better than all those Things about which you are wont to torment your selves? And will he deny you the less, who hath granted you the greater? Doth not your Heavenly Father know that you have need of these things? And would he have made you with these Needs of Meat, and Drink, and Raiment, if he had not taken care withal for to supply them? What is House or Cloathing, in Comparison with such a curious Fabrick as your Body which he hath reared? Or what is Food, if you compare it with that Noble Life which you feel your selves inspired withal? Without doubt he will not suffer you to want such small Things, who hath already been so liberal in bestowing greater Benefits; especially since these better Gifts cannot be supported without the other. Consider, as he adds, *the Fowls of the Air*; because he hath given them a Body, therefore he gives them Food: though they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns, to lay up Provision for themselves. Are ye not much better than they? Despair not then of his Providence: He will be so much the more careful of you, as you are better than Birds, and such like Creatures, who, without any Thoughts, find all that is needful for them ready at hand. That is the Third Thing.

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We have had all these great Things bestowed on us without any Care of ours. We need not therefore be so careful for the lesser and the fewer Things, when we have these of higher Worth, and great in Number, communicated to us, without any Care or Forecast at all. Which of us took any Thought how we should be born, or how we should have all the Parts of this goodly Body which we are provided withal? A little and moderate Diligence sure will serve to furnish this Body with what is necessary for it; seeing it self was formed without any the least Diligence of ours; and at the same time possessed with a large Spirit, capable both to seek all other Things, and to consider such as these. And if we will but use that Reason which God hath given us, it will lead us next to this Conclusion from what hath been said; which is the Second Thing I would have considered.

II. That there being but a few Things which we need for our Bodies, we may soon have them. A few Things are not long in getting. *Meat, Drink, and Covering* are every where to be had, if God have given us Hands and Health. It is not worse, as I said, with us, than with the brute Creatures, who have their Food ordinarily at their very Doors, and easily find a Place wherein to shelter themselves. *We need not go far to seek enough.* If we were to go a Pilgrimage to *Jerusalem* for Content: If God had not provided well for us in this Country, but we must be forced to cross the Seas for Food and Raiment:

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If we could get no Drink that is fit for us, unless we travell'd and got nearer to the Sun; there might be some Countenance for Mens Discontents, and their restless Desires might look like reasonable. But now that the Things we need are in every Town; now that we have them, as I may say, in our own Hands; now that every body can lay hold of them, who will not be idle or wicked; now when Contentment is so near us, that we have it in our selves, if we please but to moderate our Desires, and confine them to necessary Things; he is unjust and impudent who complains and murmurs.

He is a very unreasonable Man, who can never be quiet; but is always full of Cares, and vexatious Thoughts, and impatient Longings: Let him seek his Remedy at his own Hands; for there he may take it, if he please. No body will pity him, (unless mere Christian Charity move them to it) who can give himself enough, and will not. It is an excellent Saying of *Epicurus* himself, recorded in Ancient Writers, *ἄδεις τῇ μαργαρίτῃ οὐρα, &c.* Thanks be to Blessed Nature, that hath made Things necessary, easy to be found; and those Things that are not easily found, to be not necessary. It is no long Journey to that which we want: If any thing be remote from us, it is because we do not want it. This *Seneca* expresses no less worthily. To get Meat, and Drink, and such like Things, *non est necesse maria tentare, nec castra sequi, &c.* there is no Necessity to adventure our selves among Storms at Sea, or to follow the Camp,  
and



and hazard our Lives in Battels : That which Nature desires is more easily obtained, and lies fairly exposed to all. *Ad superflua sudatur* They are superfluous and unnecessary Things for which Men beat their Brains, and rack their Thoughts, and throw themselves into such great Dangers. Those are the Things which cost Men so much Toil, for which they grow old in the Camp, or are sent to strange Shores; *ad maximum est, quod satis est*; That which is sufficient, is ready at hand. If we would live with what Nature craves, it is so little, that we should never live without it. *Neque enim est unquam penuria parvi* (as Lucretius, the Epicurean Poet, speaks) for there never is any Scarcity of a little, There is no Want of a few Things. Consider, I beseech you,

III. Are not these few Needs at present supplied to every one of us; either by our own Industry and God's Blessing, or by the Portion our Parents have left us, or by the Kindness of others? Give your selves a Reason then, why you are discontented, when you need nothing material for your Satisfaction. Tell me, what one Need is there about you, that is not provided for? What Thing is it that you can call necessary, which you do not at this Time possess? You do not need a Thousand Pound; that's but a Fancy. Nor do you need a great many Sorts of Meats at your Table; that's another Extravagance. There is no absolute Need of so much as of a Pewter-Dish, much less of more costly Chargers,

Chargers, and Silver Cups; that is but the like Dream. Awake your selves: Shake your Souls a little, and stir up your Thoughts: You will find a Man may live, and be a Man, and all that he should be, without any of these. What is it then that you need? Set it down, and see whether you really need it, or only imagine that you do. Certain it is, that the Needs of Nature are so few, and so soon taken care for, that there is none of us, as I said, but hath them continually supplied, one way or other. And therefore let us be contented, whatsoever our Condition be, or else never talk of any such thing as Contentment: For if the Fancy must be pleased, it hath no Measures; but increases by being humoured. And so the Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities of being contented that way, are continually increased, even whilst we are seeking for Contentment.

There is a notable Discourse of *Phavorinus* to this Purpose; that there are Two Sorts of Poverty, one when Men are in Want, *dicuntur propter opinionem*, because of their Mind and Opinion; the other, *dicuntur propter fortunam*, by the Fault of Fortune, as they were wont to speak. For the latter of these, there is a Cure, either by what Men find themselves, or by what others give them. But for the other, there is no Remedy; for they are not sick of the same Disease with the former: Nothing will suffice them, though you give, or they get never so much. They are still ravenous, and ask more, even when they thought themselves they should be satisfied. Which is excellently



lently illustrated by a Discourse of another of the Ancient Philosophers, in *Stobæus* upon this Subject, that \* *ἀνάντες ἔχουσιν ὁρᾶν, evil Men have unsatiable Minds.* When they are Youths, saith he, they long to be Men, and fancy strange Things that they shall enjoy and do in those Days. And when they are Men, they pass a great deal of that Time in desiring and longing still after infinite Things, till Old Age overtake them. Then they cry out, that it is *βίος ἀβίωτος*, a Life without Life; and therefore wish to be young again. O! this Youth is always pleasant; but Old Age as heavy as Mount *Ætna*. They bless therefore even the Life of a Child, and would fain return, if it were possible, to their Mother's Breast. And what would they do then, when they come to know the World? Even just the same that they have done already. If they be Slaves, then they make haste to be free. Let me but obtain this, saith such a Person, and I have all that I desire. But when he is free, then he would have a Slave, and make another Man not free. If this good Fortune happen, then he would have another; for one Swallow, saith he, doth not make a Summer. After this Sunshine, he desires Two or Three Slaves more, and then some Land, and then to be Citizen of *Athens*, (or, as we say, a Gentleman) and then to be a Magistrate, and then to be a King, and then to be such a King as *Alexander*; and if he were, he would be possessed

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\* *ἅντες μέλει ἡ πᾶσι.* Ser. 95.

with his Desire to be Immortal. And could he obtain this Wish, he would be no less than *Jupiter* himself. It would not content him to be a petty God, but he would be restless till he had no Superior. Who dare affirm then, that this Man is not poor? Or what Sum of Money is it, that will rid him of these Desires? Do not Kings, who have large Empires and great Revenues, yet want more? Is there any End of their Desires, and busy Motions? Will they not even rob the Dead, and commit Sacrilege, and banish Men unjustly to supply these Wants? Together with their great Empire, they acquire a world of Necessities. And they can neither tell how to lay aside their Empire, nor how to administer their Affairs with greater Frugality. They are still pressed therefore, and urged sorely with great Streights; because they need and desire so much.

But if a Man have quit himself of all these, and got above them, he is happy; he is full, and lives at Ease; his Heart enjoys great Peace, and is at rest within it self. You cannot imagine, said *Crates*, of what Value is a small Estate, and no Cares: μέγα τὸ ἐντὶ καὶ ἀξιολόγον, it is great in truth, very considerable and praise-worthy, to have Meat, and Drink, and Cloths, and to be vexed with no Sollicitude. Thus he. Which I have related, to show how Men, guided by mere Reason, were wont to satisfy themselves, and show others the Way to Satisfaction; which was by studying to be virtuous, by bridling their Appetites, and putting an end to their Desires.

For



For which there is very great Cause, if we add this to what hath been said, that,

IV. As our Needs are all supply'd, so God perhaps *blesse*s us with more than we really need. Who is there in this Company that can say he hath nothing but just what he hath present Use for? There is scarce a Beggar but lays up something against the next Day. Say truly, is it not so with every one of you, that if you had something less than you have now, you would have Reason still to thank God, that you are not miserable; that is, you would have never the less Lack of Food and Raiment? What a strange Thing then is it, that Men should not be contented, when they may live without some things which they enjoy, and yet not be without Contentment?

Let me say thus much to those who are rich, That there is nothing will make them richer, than a Mind contented to live with less, if God please. *Securius divites erimus, cum scierimus quam non sit grave pauperes esse.* We shall be the more securely rich, when we do not imagine it so grievous a thing to be something poorer. *Is maxime divitijs fruatur, qui minime divitijs indiget.* He most of all enjoys his Riches, who doth not need so much to his Satisfaction. If thou wouldst not be troubled, (saith the same Author, *Seneca*) either be poor, or like to the Poor. A competent Fortune, he means, is most desirable to our Satisfaction; or a Spirit that doth not want that plentiful and large Estate which

which we may possess. And that we may have such a Spirit, composed and settled in the Condition wherein we are, let it be considered in the next place, that

V. If we be at present thus provided with necessary Things, (if not with more than is absolutely needful) and have been so a long time; *there is great Reason to think we shall not want in Time to come.* Some are wont to say, that they are well satisfied in what they have now; and should not be disquieted, if they might but be secure that they shall always have the like Satisfaction. Of this they are in Doubt; and for this Cause their Thoughts are troubled; they weary their Bodies and Minds with excessive Labours, and endless Cares; and know not how it may fare with them hereafter. Let such reflect and consider; Did you ever want Food and Raiment hitherto? Nay, have you not had Plenty of those Things, which your bodily Life requires for its Support and Comfort? When you took no such Care, or rather none at all; when you were Children, and lived like the Birds of the Air, were you pined, or naked, or left destitute of all things? How came you to grow up to this Estate, if it had been so with you? Cannot you believe then, nay, is it not very reasonable to conclude, now that you have Wit, and may prudently exercise and employ it, so as not to neglect your Immortal Souls, that you shall still be supplied with all that is necessary for you in After-times? What is it that  
should



should make any Difference? Your Needs will still be but few; and they will still be easily satisfied, in the same manner that they are at present. So that there can be no Cause to be troubled about what is to come; when it is so manifest that you are not like to be troubled then, if you be not troubled now.

Let us then enjoy the present, and believe that when that which is now future becomes present, we shall be able, without troubling our selves, to enjoy that also with the same Comfort. Let that Time come to us, and let us not go to meet it in our Thoughts. Let it bring its Provision along with it; we need not trouble our selves to make such great Preparation for it.

To which let me subjoin, that we know not whether that Time which we care for, will ever come or no. It is more likely that it will not, than that it will; (for few Men live till Old Age.) But if it do, it is more likely that then we shall be provided for as well as now, than that we shall not. Let us be contented therefore in this Regard in our present Condition, because there is none else that we have to care for; unless we will perplex our selves about that which may never be at all. We pray to God only to give us *this Day our daily Bread*; let us live by this Rule, and we shall be well enough.

To which add, That if it do come, there is nothing will more please us, than to think that we took no Care for it. So *Epicurus* was wont to say, as *Plutarch* tells us: *The Morrow comes most sweetly to him, who did not stand in Need of*  
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another

*another Day.* He hath more than he thought of; and God sends him that for which he took no Care.

To which add further, That looking too much to the future, abates, if not quite takes away, the Comfort which we should enjoy in Things present. We feel nothing in what we have, when our Thoughts are all employed about what we have not. In effect, we have nothing, whilst we are thus careful for the Time to come. For the Things to come we have not, else why do we trouble our selves about them; and the present we have not, because our Intention of Mind upon the other, will not suffer us to take any Pleasure in them.

Upon all these Accounts then we should rest satisfied in Things present, and not have our Eye so much upon what is future. For perhaps it may not come: And if it do, it will be as well provided for as the present; and it will be the more pleasant, if we never troubled our selves about it: And we enjoy nothing at present, if we be so intent upon the future.

To which may be added, That we shall never enjoy any thing then neither; because something will still be future. And so through our whole Life we shall never be contented in any thing, because something will be further desirable, which will make us not mind the Value of what we have already.

VI. But suppose a Man should want Things needful, and is in no Condition to provide them  
for



for himself; *ex. gr.* when he is sick, or lame, or deprived of the Use of any of his Faculties, which make him incapable of Labour; yet he is not like to be so unfortunate, as to have no Friends, or good Neighbours, and charitable Christians, that will supply him with those Necessaries. He may reasonably hope to be provided for, when he cannot take care of himself. It is seldom or never known, that any among us are left utterly destitute. Though if that should happen, it is but doing that a little sooner, which is as necessary as any thing else; that is, to leave this World, and pass to a better Country. This Consideration should make a Man the more contented, as he is; because if he find that Men are provided for, when they are sick, or otherways disabled, one way or other; surely he is in no Danger to want, when he is well, and is able to look after himself, and contribute to his own Support and Maintenance.

The rest of the Considerations that belong to this Head, I shall reserve till the next Time.

Let us now briefly reflect on what hath been said, and make these Three Uses of it.

1<sup>st</sup>, Let us acknowledge, that God is not unkind to Human Nature; but hath taken care for its Satisfaction by one Means or other. But then,

2<sup>dly</sup>, We must use the Reason he hath given us, which is the prime Perfection of our Nature; and we must use it, not so much for the *enlarging our Possessions, as for the contracting our Desires.* That's the Way to Content; not to have

more, but to desire less. So the Philosophers themselves have taught us, who preserved a great many Relicks of Ancient Truth. *Valerius Publicola*, saith *Dionys. Halicarnassens*, when he had a great many Occasions of heaping up Wealth, and that not by dishonest or unhandsome Arts, would not make use of them; but contenting himself with a small Patrimony, was pleased in a temperate and frugal manner of Life, obnoxious to no immoderate Desires: Whereby he declared, Ὅτι πλεῖστα ἔχῃ ὁ πολλὰ κακτυμένος ὄντι, ἀλλ' ὁ μετρώων δευσιμύθους, That he is rich, not who possesses much, but he who needs but a little. And thus another Philosopher answered a Man who ask'd him, How he might be rich? εἰάν τις ἐπιθυμιῶν πένητι, If in Desires (said he) a Man be poor. It wou'd be too tedious to heap up their Sayings to this Purpose; nor shall I trouble you with what *Clemens of Alexandria*, a Christian Writer, speaks on this Subject, that Riches are in the Mind, and no where else; I will only remember you in the Third place,

3. That Christianity is no unreasonable Institution, as I told you before; for its Design is only to reduce us to our first Moderation and Perfection; to renew and restore our Natures, and to make us new Creatures, by moderating our Desires, and subduing our Passions, which create us such Troubles, as by no means can be avoided, but by becoming wiser and better Men. To this let us apply our selves with that Industry and Seriousness, which we employ about Worldly Things. That only increases our Troubles, it's



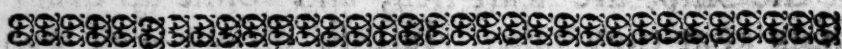
this alone which relieves them. The Defects in our Nature are to be look'd after and amended; rather than those in our outward Estate. Cure the former, and the latter will not so much molest us. But if those remain, we shall still, whatsoever we enjoy, be in Trouble and Restlessness of Mind.

For we are exactly like to those Men that go to Sea, as *St. Basil* \* hath singularly well expressed it, who not being used to it, and utterly unacquainted with the rolling and unsteady Motion of the Ship, are heart-sick, and vomit up every thing that they take. Just so do we feel our selves ill at Ease, disgusted at innumerable Things, and ever finding fault with our Condition, as they that are unexperienc'd do with the Ship. And as they imagine by shifting Places, and going into the Boat, that they shall be better; so it is with us: We seek for a Change, and hope to be well, if we had but this or that, which we fancy better than that which we have. But alas! saith he, as they, poor Men, are sick still, and nauseate all things, because *συμπεριχεται αυτοις ἡ ἀνδία καὶ ἡ χολή*, the Heaviness and the Choler still accompanies them, whithersoever they go: Even so we, *τὰ ἑνὸς πάντη συμπεριέροντες*, carrying about with us always our inbred Passions and domestick Affections, are every where tossed by them, and live in the like Tumult; finding no Quiet nor Rest to our selves, till these be cast out and discharged. To

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\* Epist. i. ad Gregor.

this we must apply our Care; and when we have once purged our selves of them, let the Affairs of the World be never so tempestuous, and work like the Sea in a great Storm; we shall not be so sick and ill at Ease, as we used to be even in a more calm and peaceable Condition. We shall better bear great Crosses, than we were wont to do little: Nay, be more contented in a mean Estate, than we ever found our selves before in a plentiful Fortune.



### P R A Y E R III.

**O** God, thou knowest the Needs of all thy Creatures; and art both able and ready to supply them, as I have found by abundant Experience, ever since I came into Being. As thou hast given me Soundness of all my Senses, and the free Use of all the Powers of Soul and Body, Thanks be to thy Almighty Goodness; so thou hast never suffered me to want my daily Bread, nor denied me a warm and quiet Habitation, nor exposed me to Nakedness, and such like Miseries. Yea, thou hast bestowed upon me many Blessings, I acknowledge, which many others want, who yet are thankful to thee, and praise thy Goodness.

There is great Reason that I should trust in thee for ever, who hast taken care of me, when I could take no care at all of my self. Thou hast given

me



me a Body and Life without my asking; and thou providest Food for the Birds of the Air, and the Beasts of the Earth, who take no Thought for it. O strengthen my Faith and Confidence in thy tender Mercy, that thou wilt still provide for me also, who humbly implore the Continuance of thy Favours to me. O that Thoughtfulness for the future, may never take away the Relish of my present Enjoyments. Make me more thankful for what I have, than desirous of what I want. Moderate my Desires, and give me the Wisdom and Grace, not to extend them beyond necessary Things; but having Food and Raiment, therewith to be content. I am exceedingly indebted to thy Bounty, which hath not hitherto confined me to so strait a Condition; but out of thy Fulness granted me a more liberal Portion. O God, preserve my Soul from being tainted with inordinate Affection to these perishing Things. Raise my Spirit above them, whilst I enjoy them; And make me feel my self able to live contentedly with less, whilst I am blessed with Plenty and Abundance of them.

And if thou art pleased to bring me to a meaner Estate, assist me with thy Grace, that I may never repine at thy Providence, nor distrust thy Care, nor torment my self with perpetual Desires of a Change; but rest in thy Fatherly Love, which hath provided for me hitherto beyond my Necessities. Make me always more careful and sollicitous how to grow better my self, than how to better my outward Estate. Turn my Thoughts the right way; and possess me with true Appre-

ensions of Things; that studying to live by sober Reason, and not by Imagination; to satisfy Nature, and not the Greediness of Desire; to purge my self from all undue Affections, and purely to comply with thy wise and good Providence, I may live a comfortable and happy Life amidst all the Confusions and Troubles of this World; and may feel it the Beginning of Eternal Rest and Peace with my Blessed Saviour in the Life to come.

Enlarge my Desires more and more after that Blessedness; and enlarge my Capacity for it, by the Increase of all Divine Virtues. Make me so holy, so humble, so thankful, so charitable, so compassionate, so disposed to do good to others, and so pleased in their Prosperity and Happiness, that I may the less doubt of thy enlarged Goodness to me here, and have an assured Hope of good Things, when I depart from hence, beyond all my Thoughts and Desires, through thy great Mercies in Christ Jesus. Amen.



S E R-



# S E R M O N IV.

I T I M. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

**I**F you believe what was said in the foregoing Discourse, I may fairly proceed (without any Preface) to show you, that

VII. The more any Man wants, the more he is taught Contentedness. Should a Man fall into such a low Condition, that he lives wholly upon the Charity of others, there is great Reason he should be satisfied; because he learns how well a Man may live upon nothing: I mean, how possible it is for a Man that hath nothing of his own, to have notwithstanding all things needful. Sickness, and such like Distresses, into which we are sometimes reduced, do show most effectually, how little will really serve the Turn; and how small Care is due to the Things of this World,

World, which then we have so little Use of, tho' we possess never so many of them. This is one of the Methods whereby God teaches Contentment with a small Portion. He either carries away our Enjoyments from us, and yet lets us see we may live comfortably; or he makes them useless to us, that so we may not be too greedy of such unprofitable Things. O that every one wou'd understand this, and learn so much by their own Sicknes, or by the Afflictions of others: That we ought not to toil and sweat so much for those Things (even at the great Cost of our Souls, and sometimes to their utter undoing) which yet can afford us so small Assistance, in a Time when we are in the greatest Need, and most desire the Help of all our Friends. If a Man can then be contented without them, and find that it is all one, whether we have them in Abundance or no; why cannot you be contented, when you are well without such a Number of them? Why should we be now so solicitous for that, which one Day we shall not care whether we have or no?

But you will say, Sicknes it self is a great Trouble, and who can be contented with that? Consider therefore again, that

VIII. What we suffer, whether it be Sicknes, or the Loss of Friends, or such like things, it is now become as natural and necessary, as what we enjoy. If we were such Creatures, whose Bodies could not be disordered; if Sicknes were a Miracle; and it were as rare for one to die, as

for



for the Sun to stand still : then it might amaze us, and affright us ; it might cast us into a great Astonishment at a thing so unusual. But now there are these Two Things to be considered, which bid us be content : That we are not such Creatures, as are made never to be annoyed ; nor are we such Creatures, as have nothing to comfort us against any Annoyance. Even this very Thing is some Stay to our Spirit, that nothing annoys us but what is natural ; and which we look for, as much as any thing else in this World.

But it is more material to consider, that

IX. Whatsoever we endure, we brought it upon our selves. It is the Fruit of Sin, and therefore why do we trouble our selves so much about that, and not rather about the Sins which have brought this Trouble and Misery upon Mankind? Consider ; Have you so behaved your selves, that you never deserved to be cross'd? Have you done all things so conformably to God's Will, that he should never do any thing, but what is very conformable to yours? Is it not a great deal worse that you shou'd displease him, than that he shou'd displease you? Who began to cross and contradict the other? Who gave the first Offence? Did not Man walk contrary to God, before he did any thing contrary to him? We should more endeavour then to reconcile our selves to God, and to take away the Cause of these Things ; than to have those Punishments removed, which are designed by him  
to

to bring us to a Reconciliation. We should study more to have God's Will done by us hereafter, than to have our own fulfilled by receiving a present Ease. For our own Will brought all these Afflictions upon us; and therefore it is so bad, that it should not be our Will to have them taken away. For that may be worse than the inflicting of them, and put us in the ready way to endless Miseries. The best Choice we can make, is to submit to God: And then we shall be content with these Afflictions, and it will be our Will to endure them; because it is a Part of his Will, to which we have submitted our own.

X. And truly if we were not Sinners, yet it is to be considered that we are Creatures; and therefore ought not to oppose our selves to the Orders of him that made us. We profess entire Dependance on him, and call our selves his Servants: Why do we take it ill then, that our *Lord* and *Master* disposes of us, as he thinks good? Did we agree with him, never to be sick? Did any of us make such a Contract with him, when we undertook his Service, that we shou'd never feel any Pain? Were there any such Indentures drawn between us, as that we shou'd never fall into Poverty, or Disgrace? Either then say that you are not his Servants, or let him rule as your Lord; and assign your Condition and your Work, according to his Pleasure. And then,

XI. Let it be considered, that your Bodies can never suffer so much, but your Souls may gain



gain much more by the Suffering. And is not this a desirable Way of thriving, and a rich Improvement? Is not this an Exchange with which a reasonable Man would be contented, to have Gold given him instead of Clay; and to lose a little Dust and Ashes, for the gaining of a Pearl of great and inestimable Price? And yet such is the Bargain that we make, when the Soul learns at the Body's Charge; as every one may do, that is chastised by the Rod of God. As the *Lacedaemonians* taught their Children, by spoiling their Servants: So doth the Divine Wisdom, with greater Reason, instruct and discipline our Souls, by those Disorders which we suffer in our Flesh. *Man is chastised with Pains upon his Bed, and the Multitude of his Bones with strong Pains, (as Elibu speaks, Job xxxiii. 19, 20, &c.) his Life abhorreth Bread, and his Soul dainty Meat; his Flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his Bones that were not seen, do stick out: yea, his Soul draweth near unto the Grave, and his Life to the Destroyers, &c.* And then God looketh upon Men, and if any say, *I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not; he will deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, and his Life shall see the Light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with Man, to bring back his Soul from the Pit, to be enlightned with the Light of the living.*

Now is this so bad a Market, for a Man to escape the Flames of Hell, by the Flames of a Fever? To be delivered from the Pit of Destruction, by being cast upon a Bed of Weakness?

ness? And yet this is the Purpose and Intention of God, to teach us Sobriety, Chastity, Heavenly-Mindedness, Liberality, Humility, and every other Virtue; by taking down the Body, for the fulfilling of whose Lusts, the Mind perhaps was altogether engaged to make Provision. Every Stroke of his Rod saith to us, Be more temperate hereafter; be sure to pray more fervently; thank me then more for all the Blessings which I bestow on thee; look after a better Life, and remember the Account thou must give at the last. He that hears this Voice, and obeys it, will have so little Reason to complain, that he will see he ought to have desired this Affliction, which God hath sent him, if it might have this Effect: And therefore much more to be contented with it now, that it is come upon him, and hath done him so much Good, even against his Will.

Yes, you will say, all this is true. We may be contented with whatsoever befalls the Body: Its Needs are but few, and soon supplied. But the Needs of the Soul, O how many are they, how great, and deplorable? What Remedy is there for them; or how shall we be contented with their Wants?

I answer, We ought not indeed to be well pleased, if it be ill with them. It is a Christian Duty to be afflicted and mourn, that they have been so long neglected, and are in Danger to miscarry. But then consider, that

XII. The



XII. The Needs of our Souls may well be supplied too; and the Supply of them is the very Thing that will give us full Contentment in every thing besides; that is, by the same Labour where-with we provide for our Souls, we shall give our selves full Satisfaction in all the Troubles of this Life that befall us. This is a short Way to Contentment, to look after our Souls: The very securing of their good Estate, is to give our selves all the Ease that can be imagined. If they be well nothing can be ill: If they feel no Grief in themselves, nothing can smart so, as to be a Vexation to us. Bring them but acquainted with that *Godliness*, which St. Paul mentions a little before my Text (and tells you *with Contentment is great Gain*) i. e. with Christian Religion, and sincere Piety; and that will render all those things familiar, which now seem very strange to us; and make us bear any Cross with an equal Mind.

That I may engage you then, and encourage you to look after this general Concern, let me propound these Things briefly to your Consideration.

1. Nothing is more certain, than that the Soul of every Man is the noblest Part of him; or rather, is himself. The Body is but the Cloaths and the Apparel that he wears, which must one Day be quite cast off.

Its Needs then, you will easily yield, are first to be considered, and in the chief place to be provided for. It is ridiculous for a Man who is cut with a Sword, to complain that his Hat is spoil'd,

spoil'd, and desire to have it mended or chang'd, when there is a great Gash in his Head, which he never thinks of. And yet just such is the Folly of Mankind to complain of their bodily Wants, and not to feel the Necessities of their Souls. Which being so great, you may

2. Consider again, That as certain Provision is made for them by the good God, as for these Carkasses. He cannot neglect the best Things in this World, who hath provided for the meanest : nor suffer those Creatures to be destitute, which know him ; when he takes such Care of those that never think of him.

3. And again consider, That this Provision must in all Reason be as easy to come by, as the other for our outward Man. It is without all doubt as near us, as, I said, the Goods of the Body are. If we will seek it, we shall find it at hand, as much, or rather more, than our Meat and Drink. The Word of Life is nigh us, as *St. Paul* teaches us, even in our Mouth, and in our Heart ; if we know any thing of the Gospel, *Rom. x. 8.* we need not go far to lay hold on true Happiness : It offers it self unto us every where in the Book of God.

4. And it may be the more easily attained, because all that is necessary for our Souls lies in a small Compass too. To be sanctified, and to be justified, comprehends all. And for the one, we have the Promise of the Holy Spirit ; and for the other, the Blood of the Son of God. Let us but live soberly, righteously, and godlily, (under which Three Heads *St. Paul* sums up all our



our Duty,) and we shall be justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ.

5. And again consider, that this Provision for our Souls must needs be common to all: So that every one of us may have our Share in it, as well as any one. It would be to charge the Divine Providence with great Unkindness, if every body in this World having its Food and Raiment assigned to it, it should be the hard Fate of some Souls, that they cannot be otherwise than poor and miserable, and forsaken of all that is good for them.

6. And again let it be considered, that this Provision must likewise, in all Reason, be ample and abundant; proportionable to all our Needs, though never so great, or never so numerous.

7. And that God having given so much towards the Supply of the Necessities of our Souls without our Labour, will no doubt give us more, when we labour seriously for it. Just as he having bestowed on us Hands, and Feet, and such Instruments of Labour, will not deny us Food when we seek it, in the Use of them.

8. Nay, more than this, consider that God bids us seek, and strive, and labour for the Food of the Soul, enduring to everlasting Life; but not for the Meat that perisheth, *John vi. 27.* Now it is a Sense naturally engraven upon the Minds of Men, that — *ὡς ὅτε δ' ἐπείρουμέναν ἡδὴ δειὸν παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ, ὁ δότιν βραχέει;* *When God thrusts*

\* Pindar. Od. 9.

*us forward, the Ways are short, and our Business is soon done.*

9. You may consider also, what Assistances he promises us; and that there can be no other Reason why our Souls enjoy not all that is proper for them, but because we do not seek after it, as we do after the Supply of our outward Necessities. This follows irrefragably and unavoidably upon the foregoing Considerations. Besides which, we have the express Words of our good Lord to justify it, that God is as willing to give us his Holy Spirit, as any Parents can be to give a Piece of Bread to his dear Child. And it is observable, that what St. *Luke* calls his *Holy Spirit*, St. *Matthew* calls *good Things*, *Matt. viii. 11. Luke xi. 13.* For in giving us his Holy Spirit, he, in effect, bestows on us whatsoever is good for us: Which we need no more doubt to receive, than Children do their Father's Blessing in the most common Things. Nor so much Cause neither is there to question it, because they are oftentimes evil; but he is good, as our Lord there supposes.

If you have not these good Things therefore; if your Souls be ignorant, void of God, and true Goodness, it is your own Fault; and with that you ought not to be contented, but instantly with the same Labour and Care to seek after God, that you do after these earthly Enjoyments.

10. And then, Lastly, consider, that in the finding of those Supplies which God hath prepared for your Souls, you will find true Contentment.



tentment. The giving of your Souls, as I said,  
 what is good for them, is the giving your selves  
 perfect Satisfaction. And therefore there is no  
 Reason for any Man to complain, if he will but  
 love himself. The Way is plain enough to his  
 Content, if he will not refuse to walk in it. Can  
 any Man say, that his Soul is neglected, or not  
 largely provided for, which hath such a Fulness  
 of all good Things, as I have spoken of, offered  
 to it in the Gospel? Is there not a Fulness of  
 Wisdom and Knowledge for his Understanding?  
 May not his Heart be full of the Love of God?  
 May not all his Affections be full of Joy? And  
 is there not a full Assurance of Hope, that he  
 may have Everlasting Life? And are not these  
 sufficient to fill him with the Fruits of Right-  
 eousness? What can a Soul want, that doth  
 not want all these? Who can be miserable, that  
 is not ignorant or negligent of this Happiness?  
 O! do but possess your selves of those Treasures  
 of Wisdom that are in Christ Jesus. Do but love  
 God with all your Heart, and all your Soul, and  
 all your Strength: Be but abundant in the Work  
 of the Lord; and let Christ be but formed in  
 your Souls, who is the Hope of Glory; and then,  
 though you may not use such a proud Expression  
 as that of *Epicurus*, that you dare *τὸν Διὶ ὀνεί-  
 κεισθαι* *αὐτοῦ* *ἀντιτάξαι* *ἀντιτάξαι*, contend with God, and  
 rival him in Happiness; yet you may say, that  
 there are none of the Princes, none of the Gods  
 in this World, whose Happiness you envy. You  
 may account your selves Owners of as great  
 Felicity as he hath, who abounds with the lar-

gest Affluence of all Worldly Enjoyments. *Disce parvo esse contentus*, saith Seneca; & *illam vocem, magnus & animosus exclama*, &c. Learn to be content with a little; and then, great Soul, thou mayst courageously utter that Voice: Let us have Bread and Water, and we will dispute with Jupiter, which of us is the happier. Such were the Vaunts and insolent Brags of Men, that were unacquainted with the good Things that are made known to us: Who may modestly say, *Believe but the Gospel, and be obedient to our Lord*; and then with a great and courageous Heart cry out in the Words of the Apostle, *Having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content*. We think not our selves inferior in Happiness to the greatest Persons in the World: Kings and Princes do not excel us in Riches: Nor do we think our selves to have the less Riches, because we have not all the Things that they have; but them rather to be poor, if they have not these heavenly Goods, which must give Contentment to the Rich, as well as to the Poor.

And what should hinder any of us, I beseech you, from having them? Have I not demonstrated, that they are to be obtained? And that God having made so plentiful Provision for our Immortal Souls, hath not made it impossible that we should come at it; but rather put it into our Hands, as he doth the Goods of our Bodies, and bid us lay hold of Eternal Life? The Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ shines into our Eyes: We hear the glad Tidings of Salvation  
 conti-



continually published in our Ears: The Love of God is often shed abroad in our Hearts: We feel our Souls strongly moved towards God, as our chiefest Good: And clearly see the Way to him is by Purity, and Humility, and Charity; which appears very amiable to us, and often win our Affections. Why should we fancy then, that it is the most toilsome thing in the World to please God, and to do his Will; when we find so much done to our Hand for us, and such Help and Assistance offered to us, nay, already working in us? Let us lay aside all such unreasonable Opinions, and bend our selves with all our Force to do good to our Souls. Because

1. As their Needs are greater than those of our Bodies, so our Care of them had need be greater.

2. And as the Things they want are of greater Worth, so they are worthy of more of our Pains than Things of less Value.

3. Since the fancied Needs likewise of our Bodies, so much employ our Time and Thoughts; it will eternally confound us, if the real Needs of our Souls be not regarded.

4. By long Neglect of them also, they may be reduced to greater Beggary; and therefore implore your speedy and earnest Diligence for their Relief, that they may not be starved and perish.

5. And since God hath made, as I said, a better Provision for them than for the Body, you will be the more ungrateful and inexcusable, if you suffer them to perish: *For he hath sent his*

only begotten Son into the World, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

6. And I told you, all other Needs will be served by providing well for them. And therefore he is a mad Man, who will not do one thing, whereby he may have all. *If God spared not his Son, how shall he not with him give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

7. This is so certain, that God hath made every thing to serve our Souls, but not our Bodies: All the Creatures here, all the Contingencies good and bad, the Body it self, yea, even its Afflictions and Chastisements which the Flesh groans under, are Medicines, and the most excellent Restoratives in the World to our Spirits. Besides all the Powers of the other World, that come to their Assistance; the Holy Angels, the Son of God himself, the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Glory of God, which descends and exposes it self to our Eyes, that we may lift up our Souls to it, and be happy.

By which you see, in Conclusion, that what we think hinders our Happiness, may exceedingly promote it. Poverty it self, and the Want of Worldly Things, need be no Impediment to our getting these Divine Goods; but rather provoke our Souls to bestir themselves for that which they may partake of, whether the World will or no. Diogenes was wont to call Poverty, *αὐτοδίδακτον ἑπικέρημα πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν*, a self-learned Help to Philosophy; or, as others express his Words, *αὐτοδίδακτον ἀρετῶν*, a Self-taught Virtue. A

Condi-



Condition of Life, which without any Teacher instructs us to be virtuous: That to which Discourses persuade us, this compels us to embrace. It pushes us forward, if we mind its Discipline, into the Love of God and Piety; which is our only Support and Comfort in such Cases. It shows us clearly, where our Happiness lies; and by taking away those Things to which our Hearts were apt to cleave too much, it carries us to the other World, and says, Here is your Happiness. Seek these Things above: None can hinder you from getting these Riches, nor take them away from you. Make up all your Wants here. Be not poor every way; in Body and in Soul too. What Satisfaction others seek for in this Lower World, do you take in the Higher. Be as humble as your Condition. Learn Sobriety, now that you cannot well be intemperate. Learn to pray to God more earnestly, now that you stand in such Need of his Fatherly Care. Discharge your Heart of Covetousness, now that you see to what little Purpose it serves. Learn to love your Neighbour as your selves, now that you find what Need you have of other Mens charitable Assistance: And settle your Hope only in Heaven; for there only, you see, it can be secured. This is the Language of Poverty, if we would understand it. Which made *Arcefilaus* say, That Poverty was a very coarse and crabbed Nurse, but bred up exceeding good Children: It being *καθόλου γυμνάσιον ἀρετῆς ἐμπερακτον*, an efficacious School of Universal Virtue. And it was an Observation among the *Greeks*, that the

most excellent that their Nation ever bred, were of the poorer Sort. Such were *Aristides*, and *Phocion*, and *Epaminondas*, and *Pelopidas*, and *Socrates*, and *Ephialtes*; all Men of mean Extraction in the several Cities wherein they were born.

By which they thought they could demonstrate, and frequently mention it in their Books, that it is not true which is commonly said, that Poverty is an Hindrance to Virtue, and Riches an Help. Do not you see, said they, that many of the poorer Sort turn Philosophers? Is it not certain which *Theognis* said, that *far more perisb with Fulness, than with Hunger and Famine?* Are not Men compelled by Poverty to Temperance, and by Riches to the contrary? Let us not then take it so heinously, if this be our Portion, which many Excellent Men have endured. Let us resolve to be thankful, that we are still in the Way to Bliss. Let us remember, that there is no Cause of Complaint, if we may be such great Gainers. And we may be so, or else the Apostle deceives us (as well as all other Wise Men) when he tells us, that *God chastises us not for his own Pleasure, but for our Profit, that we may be Partakers of his Holiness.* And that *our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory,* Heb. xii. 10. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

P R A Y.



## PRAYER IV.

**O** Lord, the Fountain of all Good; whose Blessings are derived in several Channels to us, especially to our Souls: Unto which all things minister, and help to promote their Eternal Welfare. I see the large and abundant Provision, which thou hast made for them in Christ Jesus. Thou hast opened the Heavens, and let down Eternal Life unto us. Thou hast set before us the Glory of another World; and called us to thy Kingdom, and promised to make us Heirs with thy only Begotten Son, and to give us an Everlasting Inheritance. I thank thee, that thou hast brought the Word of thy Gospel so nigh me, and put it even into my Mouth, and into my Heart; and that I have felt thy Holy Spirit in my Soul, so often disposing my Mind and Affections to seek that Blessed Immortality. Every good Thing in this World bids me love thee, and rejoice in thee, who art the Giver of it: And all the Crosses likewise and Afflictions of this Life tend to make me happy, by teaching me Moderation and Sobriety, Humility and Heavenly-mindedness, Faith in thee, and absolute Resignation to thee, with fervent Devotion, and passionate Desires after a better Life.

O God, how excellent is thy Loving-kindness! therefore the Children of Men put their Trust under the Shadow of thy Wings. How inexcusable shall

shall I be, if I should starve in the midst of such Abundance; and perish, when thou hast sent me such great Salvation? How shall I escape, if after thou hast done so much without my Thought or Labour, I should take no Pains to attain the End of thy extraordinary Grace towards me? Excite in me, I beseech thee, a greater Sense of thy Love; and endue me with a greater Care to improve every thing, to the enriching of my Soul with Spiritual Wisdom, and all Divine Virtues. That so I may be the better able to bear all the Troubles of this Life; and neither the Infirmities and Pains of this Body, nor the Poverty and Meanness of my outward Estate, nor the Loss or Unkindness of Friends, nor any other sad Accident, may throw me into Discontent and Impatience of Spirit: But I may still remember, that as I suffer nothing but what I deserve; so my Soul may be a Gainer by all my Sufferings. Help me therefore, instead of murmuring and repining at my present Condition, to apply my self to make the best Use of it, whatsoever it be, to my everlasting Advantage. Purify and refine my Spirit more perfectly from all unreasonable Opinions, and purge out of my Heart all inordinate Affections. Settle my Will in an immoveable Submission to thine. And considering both that I am thy Creature, and that I am an Offender, enable me always to rest satisfied with thy Proceedings, and acknowledge that I am less than the least of thy Mercies.

Pardon, good Lord, all my Ingratitude and undecent Complaints; pity my Infirmities; accept my Holy Desires; confirm all my good Purposes; strengthen



strengthen and impower my Endeavours; that I may mortify every bad Disposition in me, faithfully discharge my Duty, rightly use thy various Blessings, patiently bear the heaviest Afflictions, and make for my Soul most certain Provision; by all the Means of Grace, by the good Counsels of others, the Inspirations of the Holy Ghost, thy many remarkable Providences about me, and whatsoever Courses thou takest with me, to bring me safe through this Life to an happy Eternity. Amen.

8 IV. M. T. I

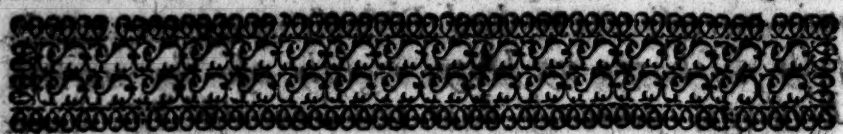
And having Food and Raiment let us be  
thereunto content.



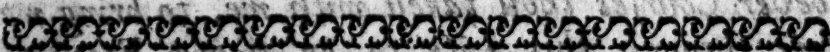
HERE is a great Fulness of Thoughts  
I told you, which our own Minds and  
our own Wishes; for  
the  
and the  
Providence of  
God, we shall  
some of them, may be drawn from  
the Consideration of our selves, have been al-  
ready handled; and let some Sense, I hope, of  
this Truth upon you, that we are not to misera-  
bly waste our Lives in vain, but to be happy  
in the various Changes of Life, to be happy  
Men.

I come now, according to the Method  
of leading you to the Consideration of  
others:

S E R.



# S E R M O N V.



I T I M. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

**H**ERE is a great Fulness of Thoughts,  
**T**I told you, which our own Minds and  
the Gospel also present us withal ; for  
the quieting of our Hearts in all Ca-  
ses, and the giving us full Satisfaction, into  
whatsoever Condition, by the Providence of  
God, we shall at any time fall.

Some of them, which may be drawn from  
the Consideration of our selves, have been al-  
ready handled ; and left some Sense, I hope, of  
this Truth upon you, that we are not so misera-  
ble as we make our selves ; but may find Means,  
in the various Changes of Life, to be happy  
Men.

II. I come now, according to the Method  
propounded, to lead you to the Consideration of  
others :



others: From whose Condition many Reasons likewise may be fetch'd, to the making us better pleas'd than commonly we are, if we will not deny our Minds the Contemplation of them.

As first of all,

I. It is very plain, that there are many in the World who have less than you have; innumerable Persons, whose Condition is far worse than that which you are discontented withal. We cannot say this, I confess, to all Men in the World; but as to every one here present, it carries a great Truth in it: That there are those who are placed in harder Circumstances, and have more Miseries to contend withal, than any one of us have. Let me convince you of this, and then you shall see what Advantage I shall make of it to my present Purpose. Which of you would exchange your Condition with a *Turkish* Slave? Who is there among the most discontented Multitude, that wou'd take his Place who lies upon a Rack? Wou'd not he that rows upon the Water think his Lot more miserable, if he was chained to his Oars? And he that digs in his Garden, or ploughs his Field, wou'd he not think himself condemned to a more calamitous State, if he were forced to dig Night and Day in the Mines? Wou'd not he that hath but an Acre of Land, think his Fortune harder, if he was banished from his own Country? Nay, wou'd not he that hath nothing but the Air and the Light of the Sun, think it a more dismal Condition, if he was thrust into a Dungeon,

and

and forced to draw his Breath in a Cave, or Hole of the Earth? Wou'd not he who hath lost any of his Relations or Friends, think his Fate, as they call it, more cruel, if he should be bereaved of all in one Day? And yet there are, and have been such Persons in the World, whose Portion is no better than Slavery, and Banishment, and such other Miseries as I have mentioned; in Comparison of whom, your Condition is so splendid and sumptuous, that it is a strange Ingratitude to be ill pleased with it. You never heard perhaps the Story of *Franciscus Buffalus*, a Citizen of *Rome*, who saw Two of his Sons cut off by the Hangman for Sedition, and Two others kill each other in a Duel, and another that killed his Stepmother, and a Daughter that in the Presence of her own Husband drank a Draught of Poison. And yet *Hier. Cardan* \* reports this for a certain Truth; and cries out upon Occasion of it, *Hæ sunt scæne mortaliū, &c.* These are the Scenes of Mortals; these are their Calamities: Which yet if a Man wisely consider and say, *Nudus in hunc mundum veni, &c.* I came naked into this World; whatsoever I have, it is pure Gain; it was sent me, and I must return it back to him of whom I borrowed it; he will bear and suffer all with an equal Mind.

I am sure they that see so many more miserable than themselves (with whose Stories I might

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\* *De Summo Bono.*



dire you) have great Reason so to do. For con-  
 sider, I beseech you, First, That it is their Duty to be contented in  
 that lamentable Condition; and it is possible for  
 them so to be: (for nothing can be a Duty,  
 which is impossible) and therefore certainly it  
 is your Duty to be contented in a fairer Fortune;  
 and it is not only possible, but easy for you to  
 attain that Contentment. Tell your selves;  
 how shall they ever be contented, if you cannot?  
 (And yet, no Question, you would exhort them  
 to it.) And if they can, then how shall you  
 ever excuse your selves, if you be discontented?  
 2. Consider again, That such hath been the  
 Condition of many good Men, as I have descri-  
 bed, (read *Heb. xi.*) and yet they took joyfully  
 the Spoiling of their Goods; they sang in Prison;  
 and when they had nothing, were as possessing  
 all things. Why then do not you rejoice in a  
 better and more plentiful Estate? You have the  
 same Cause that they had to be contented; and  
 far less Cause to be troubled.  
 3. Again consider, That this may be your  
 Condition; according to this certain Rule, That  
 may happen to all, which happens to any. If  
 you be not therefore contented now, how will  
 you be contented then? He that is not full with  
 a great deal, how will he be full with a little?  
 4. And if it may be your Condition, then  
 consider how much more Reason you have to  
 thank God, that you are not so miserable as you  
 might be, than to complain that you are not so  
 happy as you would be.

5. And

5. And consider further, How much you wou'd be troubled in such a Lamentable Condition, for your Discontent in a Better. And therefore let that seem very unreasonable unto you Now, which would appear to be so Then. Especially since by judging it unreasonable Now, you will give your selves much Ease; but the Sense of its Unreasonableness Then, will be your exceeding great Trouble.

6. And consider once more, How much such Persons, as I have mentioned, wou'd rejoyce in your Estate, if they might but possess it. Why should not you your selves be as well pleased in it, as others wou'd be? Look upon it with such Eyes as they do; and then you will take the same Comfort in it, which it wou'd afford to them. Let your Thoughts place you awhile in Their Condition, and that will teach you what to think of Your own. If the very Thought or Fancy of being so miserable as they are, make you very sad; then judge how sad they are, who feel those Miseries. And if the very Thought or Fancy of being so happy as you are, exceedingly please them; then judge again, how well you shou'd be pleased, who feel and enjoy that Happiness.

These are Considerations so much founded in Nature, that the Heathens have light upon them in their Meditations. *Cum aspexeris* (saith Seneca \*) *quot te antecedunt, cogita quot sequuntur.* When thou beholdest how many there

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\* Epist. 15.



are before thee, look back also and see, how many there are that follow behind thee. But this is the Mischief of greedy Desire, that it will never hearken to this Rule. *Habet hoc vitium, &c.* (as he \* speaks elsewhere;) *All Ambition hath this Fault in it, that it never casts its Eyes back.* The very same we may say of Impatience and Discontent, with a little Change of those Words which we there read. None of those who are pressed with an hard Fortune think how many are more unhappy, but only how many are more happy than they. And it is not so much a Satisfaction to them to see a Number behind them, as it is a Grief to see any before them. All Discontent and Vexation hath this ugly Quality in it, *non respicit, it never looks behind it.* Men see a long Train perhaps of Persons that march before them, gallantly attired, state-ly mounted, and adorned with all the Bravery of Fortune; and these they gaze on, admiring the Lustre and Brightness of their Condition. They sigh to think that they cannot come near them; and pine away in the midst of many Blessings, because they are forced to follow at such a Distance from them. Whereas if they would not fasten their Eyes alone on them, but cast them awhile behind, they would behold an innumerable Rabble dabbling in the Dirt, poor, sordid, and ill accoutred; in Compare with whom, they would think themselves amongst the foremost Persons. Τὸν ἐνδυσμῆσθαι δεικνύει

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\* Epist. 72.

*ἡμεῖς οὖν καὶ οὐκ ἀγαθοὶ, &c.* (as Phavorinus used to say.) He that will enjoy Tranquillity of Mind, must in a good Estate consider, how many there are that enjoy less good; and in an evil Estate, how many there are that suffer more Evil. If we would do so, we should find the Number to be so great, that we should wonder and be thankful, that we are not among those wretched People.

And so much for the first Meditation.

III. Let us now proceed to consider, That as many possess a great deal less than we; so among those, there are (or have been) many that are more contented. I will give you an Instance in Scripture, and then in other Story. Look into the History of *Jacob*, when he was upon his Journey to a far Country, very remote from his Father's House. After God had appeared to him in a Vision of Angels, and thereby typified a great Favour to him, what was it that he desired of God? How bountiful did he desire that he would be to him? Read *Gen. xxviii. 20.* and you shall find, that he only desires God to keep him from Danger, and to give him *Bread to eat, and Raiment to put on.* Nay, what doth he vow to God, if he might have but thus much? *Then shall the Lord be my God; i. e. I shall be eternally obliged to love and honour him; and whatsoever he shall give me, I will surely give the Tenth of all to him,* ver. 21, 22. You see what a small Portion he chuses for himself; and how grateful he resolves to be, for whatsoever God should



should give him more. Nay, that which is most strange, even when he had no more, and hoped for no more, than would serve him for his long Journey, he had so great Trust in God, as to spend some of it in Devotion to him. For so you read, *ver. 18. that Jacob rose early in the Morning, and took the Stone that he had put for his Pillow, and set it for a Pillar, and poured Oil upon the Top of it.* One would think that he should have had none of that Liquor to spare at this Time; being absent from his Friends, and having a great Way to go, before he finished his Travels. But so contented he was with his small Pittance, and such a strong Faith he had in the good Providence of God, that he thought he should have never the less, for bestowing some of it upon him, whose it all was.

My Beloved, all the true *Israelites* are of the same Temper and Disposition. They are well satisfied, if they have but Food and Raiment; that is, Things convenient for the Use of Life. And they have the Heart to do good, out of the little which God gives them to enjoy.

Yea, the Heathens themselves could be contented with a small Portion; which must needs turn to the Shame of all Christians, that are not so too. Among the rest of the Advantages I remember, which *Apollonius* promises to *Euphrates* (in a Letter to him) from the *Pythagorean* Philosophy, this was one; that he should have *αὐτάρκεια, εὐφροσύνη, βεβαιότητα καὶ ἀναισθησία*, Self-sufficiency, abundant Satisfaction of Mind, Patience in Labours, and all his Needs reduced

to a little room. It is very hard if Christ cannot do as much for us, as his Counterfeit, or Opposite rather, put his Followers in Hopes of. Who can look upon *Diogenes* in his Tub, and not be well pleased in his House or Cottage? Who can remember that this was all he ask'd of *Alexander*, not to stand between him and the Sun; and not be glad that he hath so many Blessings besides, wherewith God shines upon his Tabernacle? So contented this Man was, that he imagined *Socrates* (who was a poor Man too) to be a Person that had lived too delicately. For which he had no Reason but this, (as *Ælian* tells us, *L. iv. Var. Hist. C. 11.*) *μεγαραδα γὰρ ἔχων ἑστιάριον, &c.* That he was so neat and curious in his little Cottage, in his small Couch, and clean Shoes: Wherein, it seems, the good Man pleased himself no less, than *Alcibiades* did in all his Luxury. It is well known, how plain, simple and mean the Diet of Men was in the First Ages of the World. The *Arcadians* (as the same Author tells us, *Lib. 3. cap. 39.*) contenting themselves with Acorns; the *Argives* with a Kind of wild Pear; the *Athenians* with Figs; the *Indians* with their Reeds, and the *Persians* with Water-Cresses. In which Condition they thought themselves as happy, as we do in the Use of our greatest Dainties.

All which I mention only for this End, that you may consider with your selves after this Fashion: What was it that gave such Content to *Jacob*? Yea, with what Considerations did these Heathens make themselves so merry: Have not

we



we the very same? Cannot we entertain our selves with such like Thoughts? Could they say any thing to quiet themselves withal, which we are ignorant of? Either they had no Reason for what they did, or we have the very same. And if they had none, then it will be a great Shame for us, if they could be contented with no Reason, and we not be contented with so many. Ask your self therefore very often, Why am I troubled? What is it that discontents me? Have not many had less than I, and yet were well pleased? How came they by that Ease of Heart, and Quiet of Mind? Whence did they fetch Relief for their Souls, and furnish them with Tranquillity? May not I go to the same Place, and there find it? Is not my Soul as pregnant with the same Thoughts? Am not I endued with the same Understanding? Have not I all that they ever had? Yes, surely; all, but their Contentment: And therefore I resolve not to want that neither. They shall not excel me in that, since I am equal to them in all other Things; nay, I have far more Reason, I am sure, than they to be contented in every Estate.

That leads me to the next Consideration, which is this, That

III. Though many have been more contented, yet they had less Reason to be contented than we have, who are full of Discontents. They endured much, and knew little: It will be a Shame then to us, if we be not well pleased, who endure perhaps but little, and know much.

*Jacob* knew that God was good, and that he was the God of his Grandfather *Abraham*, and of his Father *Isaac*. He knew that God had taken care of them; and he saw a Vision of Angels, which by their Descent and Ascent upon a Ladder reaching to Heaven, obscurely represented to him the Providence and Care which God exercises over Men by those his Ministers. But express Promises as yet he had none, that we read of, to support his Faith and Confidence in the Divine Goodness. And as for the Heathen People, they conceived only that God is kind to all Creatures, and that Man is the best of them. That Nature is contented with a little; a good Stomach being the cheapest Sawce, and Nature the cheapest Guest. That it will cost Men more Labour to mend their Condition, than to bear it. That they who are not contented with a little, will not be content with much. That if we live according to Nature, we shall never be poor; if according to Opinion, we shall never be rich: For Nature desires not much, and Opinion hath no Measure. That all Things here are not able to fill the Mind of Man; and therefore if it be not filled with something else, it will never be satisfied with the whole World; and if it be filled with a better good, a little of the World will satisfy it. That what they endured, either could be help'd, or it could not. If it could, then they saw no Reason to complain of that which they could remedy. If it could not, then they thought it was better to bear it comfortably, than to be discomforted and bear it too.



These and such like Thoughts they had in their Minds: But they knew nothing comparable to that which we are acquainted withal; who have the Knowledge of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus; and by him have exceeding great and precious Promises of *such things as Eye never saw, nor Ear ever heard, neither did it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive.* Besides that, we know how good God was to *Abraham* and to *Isaac*, and we have the Example of *Jacob* himself to boot; and we have all the Reason that they, or any good Man, ever had: All the Comfort that the Attributes of God can afford us: All the Arguments whereby the Heathens supported themselves: And likewise an express Revelation of God's Mind and Will to us, concerning Things that otherwise could never have been known; but being made manifest, yield greater Comfort and Satisfaction to the Heart of Man, than all the Knowledge that ever was in the World before. We know the Love of God, as I told you heretofore, that passes Knowledge. We have a Fulness of Wisdom and Understanding, of Love, of Goodness, of Hope, of Joy, and of the Holy Spirit. We know that God is our most merciful Father; and that he governs the World by a Paternal Care, and not merely by his absolute Will and Power. And we know that he delights in Acts of Mercy, as appears by his exceeding great Charity towards us in Christ Jesus. And that he designs to prefer us to no less than a Kingdom, together with the Son of his dearest Love. And that we can ne-

ver be out of our Way to it, as long as we are obedient to his Will. And that the Troubles and Afflictions of this Life, are many times the readiest Way to it, if we take them patiently. And that patient Endurance will much tend to our Preferment in the other World. And when Crowns of Glory shall be set on our Heads, none will shine so bright as theirs, who were contented with any thing here for Christ's Sake. And therefore if we be discontented and vexed with our Condition, it must be more our Fault, than it could be any one's else that lived heretofore in Discontent. For we do not only know all that they did, who were then satisfied: But *2dly*, We know it better; and *3dly*, We have their Experience and Example also to encourage us: And, which is above all this, we have the Example, the Command, the Promises of the Son of God; which carry more in them, than all the Reason in the World besides. It is a great Disgrace to the Gospel, if it cannot enable us to do that, which a weaker Light made Men formerly sufficient for; or rather it is a great Reproach to our selves, that we should not make so good an Use of better Means, as they did of worse; but suffer our selves to be disquieted in the midst of so many Comforts, when such a few and small Consolations as they were able to pick out of themselves, were wont to compose and settle their Spirits.

Do but hear how they describe one of their Philosophers; and then keep your selves from blushing if you can, if being Christians you come  
a vast



a vast way behind them. *He that seeks his Remedy in Philosophy, (saith Seneca, Ep. cxi.) ingenti fit animo, &c. is made, a Man of a great Mind, full of Confidence and Assurance, unconquerable by any thing whatsoever.* " This is  
 " my Business (saith † *Epictetus*) to be found  
 " always void of Passion, free and without Im-  
 " pediment, always doing that which I would.  
 " So that I may say to God, *ὦ θεέ μου, τίς ἔστιν ἡ ἁμαρτία μου;*  
 " *εἰς τί σε ἠκολούθησα, &c.* Have I transgressed at any Time  
 " thy Commands? Have I abused the Faculties  
 " thou hast given me, to other Purposes? Did I  
 " ever accuse thee? Did I find fault, on any Oc-  
 " casion, with thy Administration and Govern-  
 " ment? I was sick; because it so pleased thee  
 " to have it. Others were sick too; but I wil-  
 " lingly. I was poor, because thou also woudest  
 " have it so; but still rejoicing. I was not ad-  
 " vanced to be a Ruler, because thou woudest  
 " not have me. I never desired Empire. Didst  
 " thou ever see me the sadder for want of this?  
 " Did I ever approach thee with a less chearful  
 " Countenance? Was I not ready, if thou com-  
 " mandedst any thing, or signified thy Pleasure?  
 " If thou biddest me go to such a Place, and  
 " celebrate thy Praises in the Publick Offices of  
 " Devotion, I go presently. I give thee all  
 " Thanks, that thou countest me worthy of such  
 " an Honour, to see thy Works, and to under-  
 " stand thy admirable Administration. Let  
 " Death seize on me, thinking on these Things,

\* Arrian. l. 3. c. 5.

"writing these Things, or reading such Things  
 "as these? What was it that *Socrates* was  
 "wont to say? "As other Men are delighted, if  
 "they see their Field grow more fruitful, or  
 "their Horses and Cattle thrive better: So I am  
 "delighted daily to find my self in better Case.  
 "What other Thing is there that a Philosopher  
 "should attend? Doth it seem nothing to thee  
 "never to accuse any one, either God or Man?  
 "Not to find fault with any thing? To go out  
 "and to come in with the same Countenance?  
 "These were the Things that *Socrates* was skill'd  
 "in; and yet no body ever heard him say, that he  
 "knew any thing.

"Thus he. And if any one reply, that this is  
 "but Talk; they seem'd brave Men at a Distance,  
 "but if one come nearer to them, they were no  
 "such thing; *Seneca* hath an Answer to him:  
 "Major est adeunti, &c. The Philosopher,  
 "saith he, is so great, that he seems greater to  
 "him that approaches him. As it is in great  
 "Mountains, whose Height appears less to them  
 "that behold them afar off; and when you  
 "draw towards them, then it is manifest what  
 "a vast way it is to the Top. Such is the  
 "true Philosopher. "In edito stat, he stands on  
 "high; he is of a lofty Spirit, and hath a true  
 "Magnitude. He doth not stand on Tiptoes,  
 "after the manner of them that would help  
 "their Stature by a Lye, and appear taller than  
 "they are. No; he is contented with his own  
 "Greatness. And why should he not be con-  
 "tented to have grown so high, that the Hand  
 "of



“of Fortune cannot reach him: Therefore he  
 “is above all Human Things; equal to himself  
 “in every State of Affairs; whether this Life  
 “proceed in an even and quiet Course, or  
 “fluctuate through Adversities and Difficulties,  
 “which are apt to disturb the Peace of other  
 “Spirits.

In this manner they discoursed; and if they  
 did not attain these Things, yet they laboured  
 after them, and thought it possible by Reason to  
 attain this Temper of Mind. Judge then what  
 a vile Disgrace it is to Christianity, or to our  
 selves, if we do not at least contend and strive  
 to be such Persons as they describe: Well pleased  
 in our Condition; submissive to the Providence  
 of God; without Complaints and Murmurings  
 at the Course of Things; thankful for the Divine  
 Benefits; constant in all Alterations and Changes  
 of Life; and ready to obey God's Orders, whi-  
 thersoever he will lead us.

Do but hear again, how they would reproach  
 one of their reputed Wise Men, who behaved  
 himself otherwise. “What! thou a Philosopher,  
 “and never satisfied? Thou a Professor of Wis-  
 “dom, and always whining, because Things are  
 “not as thou wouldst have them? Doth it be-  
 “come one of thy Education, to take every  
 “Cross so heavily? To be sad and dejected, to  
 “be vexed and angry, at what befalls thee?  
 “Look at yonder Man that follows the Plough,  
 “and hear how merrily he sings. Is it not a  
 “Shame that he should be better pleased with-  
 “out Instruction, than thou with all thy Learn-  
 “ing?

“ing? To what Purpose is all thy Pains and  
 “Study; if after all, thy Mind is not eased by  
 “it”? Apply this, I beseech you, to your selves;  
 change the Names, and argue thus in the Behalf  
 of Religion. Could an Heathen reason himself  
 into Peace and Quiet, and thou who art a Disci-  
 ple of the Revelation made by Christ, find no  
 Rest to thy Spirit in what he hath said? Is this  
 thy Christianity? Can the Son of God instruct  
 thee no better? What? an Heir of Glory, an  
 Expectant of a Kingdom in the Heavens, and  
 never satisfied, never well pleased? To what  
 End serves the Gospel? Wherefore hath God  
 given thee those New and Divine Principles, if  
 thou art still worse than they, that relied merely  
 upon the Old?

If, I say, you would after this manner sharply  
 chide and reprove your selves, you wou'd find  
 this Effect of it presently; to be at least ashamed.  
 And what do you think would be the next, but  
 to endeavour to see your selves as soon as you  
 could, in such a Condition; that you might look  
 upon your selves without those Blushes.

And hear, if you please, once more what  
 Course they took to acquire this better State of  
 Mind. “It is a sad thing, saith *Epicletus* \* in  
 “the forenamed Author, that when there are so  
 “many troublesome Things in the World, we  
 “will needs trouble our selves likewise; and to  
 “all the Calamities of Life, heap more upon  
 “our own Heads by our Impatience. Dost

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\* Arrian. Lib. 3. C. 24.



“ thou call this Piety, to be miserably afflicted  
“ for the Loss of thy Child, and such like Re-  
“ lations? What Piety, I beseech you, is it? If  
“ it be good, it is the Cause of no Evil: If it  
“ be Evil, I have nothing to do with it. I was  
“ born to that which is good for me, not to  
“ that which is Evil. But how shall I help it?  
“ I’ll tell you. The first and principal Thing is  
“ this: *When thou art affected towards any thing,*  
“ *remember presently, that it may be taken away*  
“ *from thee.* If thou kissest thy Child, if thou  
“ salutest thy Friend, do not fix all thy Thoughts  
“ there, nor suffer thy Affection to go whither  
“ it would: But draw back a little; forbid its  
“ Progress; and just as they who were in their  
“ Triumph, had one at their Back remembring  
“ them of their Mortality; so do thou add some  
“ such thing as this on all Occasions; That thou  
“ lovest one who is mortal; that thou lovest a  
“ Thing which is not thine; that it is given  
“ thee for the present, but it may be taken  
“ away, and thou hast not a perpetual Grant of  
“ it. Remember, it is but like a Fig, or a  
“ Grape, which we enjoy only at the Season of  
“ the Year: If we look for them on the Trees  
“ in Winter, it is a Folly. Just so, if thou de-  
“ sirest thy Child or thy Friend in the Time  
“ wherein they are not given thee; know, that  
“ it is as if thou shouldst desire one of those  
“ Fruits out of their Season.

“ The next Thing I advise thee, is like the  
“ former; *When thou rejoicest in any thing, op-*  
“ *pose the quite contrary to it.* What Hurt is it,  
“ if

"if whilst thou kissest thy little Child, thou lisp  
 "to it, and say, To-morrow, my pretty Babe,  
 "thou mayst die? And if to thy dear Friend  
 "thou say the same, To-morrow thou or I may  
 "go away, and we shall not see each other  
 "again. But these Things are *δυσσημια*, omi-  
 "nious and ill-boding, you will reply. Why so?  
 "or suppose it to be so; I do not care, if they  
 "do but profit me. Fear is more ominous, and  
 "of ill Report. A base and ungenerous Mind,  
 "immoderate Sorrow, Grief, Immodesty, are  
 "Things that bode far worse. And yet we must  
 "mention those Names (though of so bad a  
 "Sound) that we may caution Men against the  
 "Things themselves. But dost thou call that  
 "which is natural, an ill-sounding Thing? Say  
 "then that it sounds ill, to speak of the mowing  
 "of Corn; for that signifies its Destruction.  
 "Say that the falling of the Leaves, or the ga-  
 "thering of the Fruit, is of the same Import;  
 "for these are to be changed from what they  
 "were before, to another Thing. Yet, in  
 "truth, it is not a Destruction, but only a cer-  
 "tain appointed Administration and Dispen-  
 "sation of Things. Such is the Absence of  
 "Friends, such is Peregrination; a certain little  
 "Change. And such is Death it self; a greater  
 "Change. Not of that which now is, into  
 "that which is not; but into that, which before  
 "it was not. Shalt thou therefore cease to be?  
 "No such matter. Thou shalt only not be  
 "what thou art, but another Thing, of which  
 "this World hath no Need. *For thou wast born,*  
 "not



"not when thou pleasest, but when the World  
 "had need of thee. A good and wise Man  
 "therefore is mindful what he is, and whence  
 "he comes, and by whom he was made. And  
 "in this alone he labours, how he may rightly  
 "fill up his Place, and approve his Obedience  
 "to God. Wilt thou have me continue longer?  
 "Even as thou wilt: I am free, I do as thou  
 "pleasest. Dost thou need me no longer? Be it  
 "as thou thinkest good. I continued to this  
 "Time for thee, and for no body else; and now  
 "I go away in Obedience to thee. How dost  
 "thou go away? Again, I say, as thou wilt;  
 "as a free Man; as a Servant of thine; as one  
 "that understandeth thy Commands, and thy  
 "Prohibitions. And whilst I am conversant  
 "about thy Business, what wouldst thou have  
 "me to be? A Prince, or a private Man? A Se-  
 "nator, or a *Plebeian*? A Captain, or a Soldier?  
 "Even in that Place and Station, to which thou  
 "appointest me, will I remain. I will die a  
 "Thousand times, as *Socrates* said, before I will  
 "leave it. And where wouldst thou have me  
 "be? At *Rome*, or at *Athens*? At *Thebes*, or  
 "in the *Gyara*? (An Island this was, to which  
 "their Condemned Persons were banished.) Very  
 "well. Only do thou remember me, where-  
 "soever I am; and I am no farther concerned.

I cannot recite the rest of the Discourse of  
 this Philosopher in that Place, without being too  
 tedious; and I will briefly mention those memo-  
 rable Words of his in another.

" If

145 If thy greatest Care be really and truly,  
 what thou mayst rightly use every thing which  
 presents it self to thee; then straightway, as  
 soon as thou risest in the Morning, think with  
 thy self, *τινα δεομαι*, What do I still want to  
 make me free from Perturbation? What is  
 there deficient to true Tranquillity of Mind?  
 What am I? A Body? Or Riches? Or Fame?  
 No; none of these. What then? I am a rea-  
 sonable Creature. And what is required of a  
 reasonable Creature? Turn over thy Actions,  
 and say, Wherein have I transgressed those  
 Things that are necessary to Happiness?  
 What have I done, that is unfriendly, or un-  
 sociable and unkind? What have I neglected,  
 that I ought to have performed? There being  
 such a vast Diversity of Desires, and Works,  
 and Wishes, and Prayers, wilt thou still imi-  
 tate them? Mend thy Opinions of Things,  
 and all is mended. I am poor; but I have  
 right Opinions concerning Poverty. What  
 Hurt is it then, though others pity me? I  
 have no Dignity, nor Government, as others  
 have; but I understand what a Man should  
 think of governing, and of leading a private  
 Life. Let those look to it, that deplore my  
 Condition, and say, God help him, poor Man.  
 I am neither poor, nor covetous of more; but  
 because they are so, they think the like of me.  
 What shall I do then to them? I will go about  
 and preach, saying, Be not deceived, do not  
 err, O Men; I am well; I am not concerned  
 about Poverty, or Privacy, or any other  
 thing;



“thing; but about right Opinions of all things.  
 “None can forbid me these; and these are  
 “all my Care”.

Such were the Discourses and Reasonings of Men, that were led only by the Guidance of their own Mind. Let not the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ leave us in greater Obscurity and Cloudiness of Spirit. Let us not suffer our selves to be desolate, when we have such a Noble Comforter; nor pine away with Grief, in the midst of such high Satisfaction as he hath given us. But looking above all things here, let us say with a greater Courage than ever any Philosopher could do: *I yield up my self to thee, O God; all that I have is thine: Dispose of it as thou plearest: Order what thou judgest most convenient. I interpose not my Desires; but, imitating my Saviour, say, Not my Will, but thine, O God, be done. I will follow Jesus. I will never doubt of his Conduct. He will lead me no whither, but to that Place where he is. As thou plearest when thou plearest, and by what way thou plearest; carry me but to that everlasting Bliss.*

There cannot be a sweeter and more easy Temper of Mind than this. It is not Doggedness to be thus resolved; but the Gentleness of Christ, and a Disposition complying with his blessed Will and Pleasure. It is not to be arrogant, and to look big, thus to overlook all mortal Things; but it's true Humility and Submission to God, to be what he pleases. The Heathens themselves had some Sense of this, as we read in

*Arrianus* \*, who makes this Objection to himself, and answers it in this manner.

“ But doth not this Discourse savour of  
 “ Haughtiness? God forbid. *Jupiter* himself is  
 “ not supercilious, but only hath a settled and  
 “ stedfast Eye, becoming him that said, εἰς  
 “ εἰμὸν παλινάγρετον, ἐδὲ ἀπατηλὸν †. No Word  
 “ of mine shall ever be revoked, or deceive  
 “ those that trust to it. Such an one will I shew  
 “ my self; Faithful, modest, ingenuous, and un-  
 “ troubled. What? And Immortal too? One  
 “ that grows not old, nor is obnoxious to Diseases?  
 “ I say not so. But one that divinely dies, and  
 “ is divinely diseased. This I have, and this I  
 “ can do. To the rest I make no Pretences.

## P R A Y E R V.

**I** Prostrate my self before thee, O Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Eternal God; who art all that can possibly be, and whose Goodness designs to make us happy both here and for ever. I acknowledge that it is only of thy infinite Goodness, that I am not as miserable as any in the World are. That I enjoy so many Blessings, which ought to make me rejoice in thee, more than any Trouble can give me Cause to complain, is to be ascribed merely to thy good Will towards me. I am ashamed to think, that the most excellent Know-

\* Lib. 2. cap. 8.

† Hom. II. λ.



ledge which thou hast communicated to me of thy self, and of thy Son Jesus, hath had no greater Effect upon my Heart to dispose me to love thee, to rest satisfied in thy Love, to study to be quiet, and to be contented with my Portion; which is so fair and liberal, in Comparison with many others in this troublesome World.

Thou hast set before me thy Grace and Love in so clear and full a manner, that it ought to stir up the greatest Admiration, and make me delight in the Meditation of it. Thy Power, and Greatness, and Purity likewise is so apparent, that it ought to make me fear, lest I should offend thy Love by Unthankfulness and Discontent, or any other way. Thy Wisdom directs me; thy Truth and Faithfulness upholds and assures me; thy tender Mercies encourage me; and even thy Severity moves me to fly from that which would utterly undo me. There is nothing in thee, but I am the better for it. Thou art altogether excellent even in our Eyes; and far more excellent in the Eyes of Angels, and more understanding Creatures. They rejoice always to behold thy Face, and perpetually praise thee. But thou art infinitely more excellent in thy self, than we, or they, or any Creature else can comprehend.

How would my Heart be pricked with Desires to know thee more? How would my Spirit be inflamed with the most ardent Love to thee? How quiet and joyful should I be in thy Love, if I did really feel the Sense of what I have confessed, and uttered nothing with my Mouth, but what was first in the profoundest Depth of my Heart? But

alas! we have too superficial Thoughts of thee: Our Words are apt to be fuller than our Sense: And therefore I fall down before thee, and beseech thee to help me to consider over again what I have said of thee; and to make me feel something in my Soul of thy Divine Majesty, too big for my Mouth. Make me heartily and deeply sensible of thy Omnipotent Greatness, of thy no less Omnipotent Goodness, of thy Unspotted Holiness, of thy Unsearchable Wisdom, of thy Bottomless Mercy, and just Indignation at those Sins whereby we provoke thee: That so I may fear thee, and trust in thee, and earnestly study to resemble thee in what I am able, and to admire and adore thee in those Things which are above our Imitation. O that the least Sin may be more hateful to me, than the greatest Misery of this Life; and the least Degree of Goodness more lovely in my Eyes, than the highest Worldly Prosperity.

Endue me with a settled, quiet, and composed Temper of Spirit, like that of the Celestial Natures. Make me constant and unmoveable in the Choice of my Happiness. Fix a perpetual Cause of Joy in my Heart. And fill me with that Heavenly Sense of Things, which will be always springing up in delightful Thoughts, and comfortable Hopes, and cheerful Praises and Thanksgivings to thee, my God. Seal up my Heart with such a Sense of thy self, that nothing may hereafter be admitted there, but what will let me love thee better than it, with the purest and strongest Affection. And seeing thou hast designed us to an excellent Condition, help me ever to mind those Heavenly Things;  
and



and not set my Heart on lower Enjoyments, which thou dost not think to be good enough for me. Remember me on all Occasions, how frail these Comforts are, which I am apt so eagerly to pursue, and closely embrace. That I may love them as dying Things, and resign them back to thee with a willing Heart, and an undisturbed Spirit: Blessing thee, who hast let me enjoy them so long, and prepared better Blessings for me, by patient and contented Submission to thee, when thou deprivest me of these.

Behold, O Lord, I commit my self unto thee, and all I have, with a perfect Trust and Confidence in thee. I know thou intendest my Good in all that befalls me; and thy Wisdom knows how to effect it, even contrary to my Inclinations and natural Desires. Preserve, I beseech thee, this Resolution in my Heart for ever, to commend my self unto thee in doing good with a chearful Mind, and enduring evil with a patient Spirit. That so I may honour my Lord and Master Christ Jesus, and be an Ornament to his Religion, and declare the Power and Force of that Faith which I have entertained. O that I may never come behind those, who had less Knowledge of thee; but rather excel them as much in contented and constant Submission to thy Will, as I do in my understanding of it. And make me every Day to grow in both; to make a great Increase in Wisdom and Virtue, until I come to Perfection; and be fit to be removed hence from all the Troubles of this Life, unto Rest and Peace in uninterrupted Joys with my Blessed Saviour. Amen.

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and

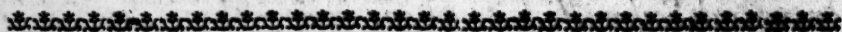


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# S E R M O N VI.



I T I M. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

**N**OT to mention again those Three Considerations, which I represented the last time, to make you contented in any Condition, from such Observations as we may make concerning the Estate of other Men : Let me proceed to tell you, that

IV. There are many who have freely chosen those Things, which we are required only to be content withal : They have desired that Portion, and quitted all things for it, which we are only to submit unto when it comes upon us.

Sundry Examples there are both of Heathens and Christians, who when they might have had Riches, (yea, when they were in Possession of them) have embraced Poverty rather, as the  
more



more desirable Condition in their Opinion, wherein they have passed all their Days. May not we then be able to be well contented with that Estate, if we fall into it, which they were so eagerly bent to attain? It is recorded of *Aristides*, that he refused to enjoy any Wealth, because he saw that few did stoutly bear the Grievance of Poverty; and he would show that it was no Disgrace, but in them only that were poor against their Wills. *Crates*, it is well known, threw away all his Possessions; and then caused it to be proclaimed in these Terms: *This Day hath Crates set Crates free.* *Epaminondas* also, the greatest Captain of his Time, (and thence called *Zeus*, a God; and *saviour*, the Saviour of his Country) had vowed such a Love to the lowest Condition which the Apostle here describes, that he would not be Master of more than one Suit of Apparel at a time; and chose to lie in Bed till it was mended or made clean, whatsoever Business he had in hand. And then among Christians, I need not relate how many Hermits, and Anchorites, and Monks have filled the World with Stories of their professed Poverty; wherein they gloried, and protested they found more Satisfaction in it, than all the Riches of the World could afford. You know likewise, that many fullen People among our selves have rejected the good Things of this World, as if they were not to be endured; having placed their Glory in ill-fashion'd Cloaths, and thought it an Honour to them to be poorly attir'd.

Consider then, I beseech you; may not we be persuaded to be content with that which they loved? Is it not possible for us to bear that Condition, which they were fond on, and desired? Shall that seem such an heavy Burden to us, which they esteemed the greatest Ease? Surely we may prevail with our Hearts not to murmur nor repine, not to be troubled extremely and cast down, when the Providence of Almighty God, not we our selves, shall chuse such a Portion for us. Especially if it be considered,

V. That they chose those Things out of false Principles, which we are only to be contented withal out of true. It was not the Will of God, that they should betake themselves to Beggary; but it is his Will, that we should endure what he thinks fit to lay upon us. It was a Mistake, to think that Riches are an Hindrance to good Men; for *the Crown of the Wise, saith Solomon, is his Riches.* It was to be *righteous over much*, (as *Maimonides*\* interprets that Place in *Eccles. vii. 17.*) to abandon the Use of Wine, of Flesh, of handsome Cloaths, of Marriage, and such like lawful Things. It was a Weakness (to say no worse) to call this Perfection, and the State of Religion, and such like Names: For *St. Paul* thought the Excellency of a Christian Spirit was, to *know how to abound, and to be full*, as well as how to want, and to be empty. And therefore if they could do more than is required of us,

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\* In his Treatise, De Scientia, cap. 3.



and if false Principles and Fancies could move them to such Undertakings; surely we may do what is really commanded, especially by the Power of Truth, and a large Stock of heavenly Principles, if we will but apply our Mind unto it. As much as Truth is stronger than Error, and it is easier to do a little than much; so much stronger is the Reason that we have to be contented, and so much easier is this Duty, than that which they performed. If we had no more Reason than this, that it is the Will of God we should submit to our present Condition; it would be more, as I said, than they had to persuade them to do those strange Things: For there was no Will of his, that required them at their Hands. If they did so much out of their own Will, it is very hard if we cannot do what is a great deal less, in Compliance with the certain Will of our Heavenly Father: Especially when we know that his Will is good, and is guided by the highest Reason in the World; which cannot mistake, nor possibly contrive how to grieve and vex us. And when we consider withal, how many ways it may effect our Good; which we have the more Reason to hope for, when any Affliction is a Piece of God's Discipline, and not a Penance of our own imposing upon our selves.

The Sum of this Particular is, That no Man need be discontented, who will use his Reason, seeing others have been more than contented out of false Reasons.

VI. Again:

VI. Again: If others who are in the same Condition with you be discontented, consider with your selves what you would say to them to give them Satisfaction, if you were called to be of their Council; and say that very thing to your selves; and if there be any Force in your Arguments, you cannot be dissatisfied. Would you bid them get more Riches? Alas! that's their Grief, they cannot tell how to get them. Would you bid them labour Night and Day? So they do, and yet are never the nearer to them. Would you persuade them to hope for better Fortune? In this they are not deficient neither; but it is the very thing which torments them, because their Hopes are frustrated and disappointed. Would you tell them, that however they may be assured, that had they but more than they have, they would be satisfied? That's not true neither; for others are not so. What would you then say to them? Set your Mind at rest. Desire not these Things so eagerly. Be not concerned so much, for that which you do not need. Grieve not for that which you cannot help. Take not away the Comfort of what you enjoy, by vexing for what you want, &c. That very Counsel take your selves. Say but to your own Heart that which you would apply to others in the same Condition, and you will be quiet. Either it is impossible to administer any Comfort to another Person in the Day of his Distress; and you must bid him still be troubled, for there is no Remedy: or if you think that he may be relieved,



then follow that Advice which you prescribe to him. For how should you think that another will be moved with that, which doth not move your selves at all.

There is a notable Discourse on this Subject, in an Author I named the last Day. “ If you  
“ observe it, saith he \*, Men pity and bewail  
“ others, not for that which truly deserves it,  
“ viz. their Crimes and Offences; but for their  
“ Poverty, and their want of Authority, and  
“ their Losses of several Worldly Goods.

Now what shall a Man chuse to do in this Case? Wilt thou go about to persuade the Multitude, that none of these Things are so bad as they imagine? That it is possible for a Man to be poor, and of no Account, and yet be in a blessed Condition? Alas! it is not given thee. It is not in thy Power to persuade them. That which is given thee, is to persuade thy self. And hast thou not yet persuaded thy self, and yet goest about to persuade them? Who is there that hath been such a long time acquainted with thee, as thou thy self? Who hath been so conversant with thee? Who is there that hath such a Power to persuade thee? Who is nearer to thee; who can wish thee better, and be more kind to thee, than thou to thy self? What is the Reason then, that thou hast not prevailed with thy self to learn this good Lesson? Thou runnest up and down, this is thy Business, thou say’st, to learn not to be swallowed up of Sorrow; not to be in

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\* Arrian. Lib. 4. Cap. 6.

Trouble and Confusion of Spirit ; not to be cast down and dejected ; to be free, and under the Dominion of nothing. And hast thou not heard, that there is but one way to these Things; *viz.* to let alone those Things that are out of thy Power, to yield to them, and to confess that they belong not to thee, because they are not within the Compass of thy Will, and cannot be commanded by thee? Now that one shou'd think so or so of thee, what Kind of thing is it? Is it not one of those that are out of thy Power? Canst thou govern other Mens Thoughts? Then this is nothing to thee; what they think is not a Matter in which thou art concerned. While this therefore still bites and gnaws thy Heart ; while thou art troubled and vexed at it, dost thou imagine thou hast persuaded thy self what is good, and what is evil? Why dost thou not leave this Foolery, and become to thy self, *καδιδασκαλος* *καὶ μαθητής*, both Master and Scholar? Teach thy self effectually, that which thou pretendest to teach others. Let the rest of the World look to it, if it be good for them to forsake Nature, and live contrary to her Prescriptions: There is none nearer to me than my self, and I will be careful to persuade my self otherways. In order to which, if you see your Neighbours have more than you have, it wou'd be well to consider with your self,

- VII. Whether they are contented, or no. If they be not; then how shall you be contented, merely by having those Things which they enjoy,



joy, seeing they afford no Contentment to them that have them? If they be, then so may you also; seeing there are others that have more than they, and yet they do not, it seems, desire it, but rest in their present State. Look how they satisfy themselves; and the same Course do you take, for your own Satisfaction. Are they so full, that there is no room for Desire? Are there not those in the World who excel them, as much as they excel you? Do not they behold many Persons set in an higher Rank, as you behold them advanced above your own Condition? Why do not they then long to be as good as those, according as you long to be as them? Why are they not vexed with unsatiable Appetites, to raise their Fortunes as high as their Neighbours; according as you are ever wishing to be in their Station? If they can be pleased to stand where they are, then you may stand still too. If they be satisfied, and it is not by Virtue of the Worldly Goods they enjoy, (as I shall shew hereafter) but by the Principles which their Minds have received; then you may attain the same Happiness, though you have not all that they possess.

VIII. Consider likewise, that if others have more than you in some things, you may have as much as they in many other: And that those Things wherein you are equal to them, are so much more valuable than those wherein you are inferior; that they ought to be more powerful to give you Content, than the other to give you  
any

any Disturbance. There are that have more Riches, suppose, than you have; or they are advanced to greater Honours and Dignities; and therefore they despise you, and look with a supercilious Countenance upon your poor Condition. What then? You are Men as well as they: You have Reason and Understanding: You have those precious Jewels the Eyes, and all other Powers of the outward Man: You have as constant Health, as goodly an Aspect perhaps, as fair Proportions of Body; and besides, you are capable of loving God, and of living with him for ever. Why should you then be troubled, who have as many of those which are the best Things, as the Men that think themselves so much above you? And differ from them only in some smaller Matters, which belong not at all to the Being of a Man? Fancy indeed accounts nothing excellent, but what is rare. But Reason corrects this Folly, and lets us know that the most common Things are the most excellent of all. Τα μὲν πάντα (saith *Sextus* \*) τίμα εὐαγδοῦναι, τὰ δὲ σπιτερόφα ἡμῶν ἢ εὐπαρεχόμενα: Things that are scarce, seem very precious; but those Things that are familiar to us, (and, as it were, bred up with us) and which easily present themselves, are not so esteemed. Whereas if we could fancy Water to be scarce, what a precious Liquor, saith he, would it be accounted; of greater Price than the most valuable Things that we possess? And on the contrary, if Gold were

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\* L. I. Hypot. cap. 29.



as common as the Stones in the Streets, who would think it so noble a Metal, and shut it up so close and so carefully in their Chests?

Let us take a true Value of Things; and of the best we shall find that we have great Plenty, as well as other Men: And that innumerable Things (the Benefit of which we enjoy) are really better and more necessary, than those whose Scarcity makes them more esteemed. We ought not to complain as we do, because we are not so high as others, but perhaps contemned by them. If we do, it too much justifies their Scorn and Insolence.

Do not wonder at this Assertion; for it is a certain Truth, that there is the very same Reason why you shou'd be contented and void of Envy, though you be poor and contemptible, that there is why others, who are Rich and Honourable, should not be proud, nor contemn you. You take it ill, if they be full of Disdain, and look scornfully upon you. You think it to be a great Piece of Injustice and Folly in them, if they fastidiously behave themselves, as if they took themselves for another Sort of Creatures; as much above us, as we are above Apes and Monkeys. And why so? You can give yourselves no Reason of this; but the same Reason will serve to make you contented and well pleased, in the Want of such Things as make them foolishly despise you. Are they material and great Things, wherein they differ from you? Are you really worse than they in the most substantial Endowments? If so; then why are you  
angry

angry that they esteem of you meanly, who have not Things of such Moment as they have? Why do you ill resent it, that they undervalue you; since, upon this Supposition, you are so much below them in that which most concerns us? But are they poor Trifles in which they are superior to you? Do they make no such Difference of your Person from theirs, as to make you contemptible? Is the Want of them no real Foundation for their vile Opinion of you? Then you may be contented, seeing you want such sorry Things; which should not, in your Judgment, advance your Neighbour into so lofty an Opinion of himself above you. If they make you really much below him, then why do you wonder at his not respecting you? If they do not; then another may as much wonder at your Discontent and Trouble about your Want of such Things, as you do at his Pride and Vanity in the Enjoyment of them. The Truth is, all they who are not well contented in their Condition, do too plainly countenance, as I said, the Haughtiness, Disdain, and Arrogance that is in others, who are in an higher Estate. This they judge to be Matter of great Glory, or else they would not be so much afflicted when they are in a lower Condition, which is not really inglorious. They do as good as say, O what brave Persons are those? How happy, how blessed are they? What a vile Thing am I, in Comparison with them? Alas! I am the most wretched Creature in the World; destitute of such and such noble Enjoyments, as promote them to such Eminence.

This



This is the Sense of their discontented and envious Language, wherewith they unawares disparage and debase themselves. If they would be better pleas'd, it would prove one of the best ways to give a check to those who vapour over them.

It is a most excellent Expression of Solomon, Prov. xi. 12. *He that is void of Understanding, despiseth his Neighbour; but a Man of Understanding holdeth his Peace.* It is a Folly for a Man to despise another, because there is no great Difference between them. But then it is as great a Folly, on the other hand, to be discontented and murmur at it; and that for the very same Reason, because the Difference is not very great between them. It is want of Wisdom, that makes one proud and disdainful; and it is the Understanding of another, which makes him hold his Peace; *i. e.* take no notice of it, nor at all repine at that foolish Behaviour. And the Reason is secretly couch'd in the Words; *viz.* because he is his Neighbour. Whatsoever any Man is pleas'd to think of another, there is a great Similitude and Likeness between them; a near Conjunction, and as it were Community, in divers great Things. And therefore, if he forget them, which makes him proud; the other ought to remember them, and that should make him hold his Peace. They were both made of the same Matter; both cast into the like Mould: Both came alike naked into the World; both must go alike out of

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it;

it ; and expect Rewards and Punishments after this Life, without any Regard of Persons.

Why then should he be proud : And again ; Why should'st thou be discontented ? For these Things where you agree, are,

1<sup>st</sup>, *Plura*, more numerous than those where in you are unlike. And,

2<sup>dly</sup>, They are *Majora*, greater by far, and of higher Account ; in as much as it is a greater Thing to be a Man, than to wear fine Cloaths. And,

3<sup>dly</sup>, They are *Antiquiora*, far more ancient, and of greater Antiquity ; for which Cause, they are of more Dignity, and carry in them the Marks of Nobility. As soon as we came out of our Mother's Womb, we appear'd compleat in all the Parts of our Body, and endow'd with a Capacity of better Things, as well as themselves. That which makes us unlike, is of a later Date ; a great many Things, perhaps, but newly added ; and therefore cannot make any considerable Difference. And likewise,

4<sup>thly</sup>, They are *Firmiora*, more durable, firm and lasting. We can never be unlike in these : They are Bonds, which tye us and them so fast together, that they can never be broken. But as for all the other, they may be soon snapt asunder ; and he who is now rich and flourishing, may on a sudden be as mean, as the Man whom he despises. Why should'st thou not then be well pleased in this Capacity ? Or else give him Leave to boast of his Inequality. Either think



that he is not unreasonable in despising thee; or think thy self unreasonable, in being troubled at that Despisal, or at any thing else which thou wantest, and he enjoys. For the most, and the greatest, and the most ancient and most lasting Things thou dost not want; and the rest thou needest not so sadly resent the Want of, seeing thou hast enough besides.

IX. But let us proceed a little farther, and advance our Thoughts to this Consideration, That if others have more in some things, you perhaps have more than they in others; and those of the best Concernment also. It were well, if Men would not delight to make Comparisons between their and other Mens Condition, so much as they do; but only consider, whether they have not really sufficient or no to support this mortal Life. Yet if they will needs employ their Mind in this way, let them take these certain Rules to direct their Proceeding. (1.) Let them compare themselves with all Men, and not only with some few. And (2.) Let them compare themselves with them in all things, and not merely in some Particulars. And (3.) Let them compare themselves with them at all Times, and not only at some certain Seasons. Now if you consider all things, are not you, or may not you be richer in several Regards, than those who are above you in outward Wealth? May you not be rich in Faith, and Heirs of a Kingdom? Mayst thou not have fewer Cares, more Joy and Heavenly Comforts than he possesses, who sits upon

a Throne? Nay, may'st thou not have more Understanding, better Abilities of Mind, a clearer Wit and a sounder Judgment, than he that loftily overlooks thee, because of other little Differences? Wouldst thou exchange these Things, for all his fine Enjoyments? Wouldst thou chuse to be in the same Condition with the rich Fool, whom the Gospel mentions; if thou mightest enjoy a Thousand Worlds? Why then canst thou not be better contented, since thou hast, or may'st have more, than all that which they have heaped up? And if thou art contented, then consider how much more rich thou art, though never so poor, than he that is a Prince, but cannot with that Estate be contented. Thou needest but a little; and his Needs are very great and vast. He wants a Thousand Things every Day, and thou wantest but one or Two. He is miserable if he have not large Dominions, and thou lackest nothing but that which thou canst never lack, Food and Raiment.

If those Creatures be most perfect which need least, (according as the Ancients used to discourse, particularly *Antonin. L. 9. c. 35.*) a Man more perfect than a Child, because he needs less Attendance; an healthful Man more perfect than a sick, for the same Reason; and an Angel more perfect than any of us, who want Food and Covering, which he doth not: Then thou who art contented with a little, approachest nearer to the most excellent Natures, than he who hath never so much, but wants all that to his Contentment. Do not murmur then and repine: Thou  
hast



hast really more than many others that are below thee; yea, more than those whom thou accountest above thee; if thou wilt but consider thy self, and not let thy Fancy abuse thee. It is a most excellent Fable which *Achilles Tatius* \* hath furnished me withal, for the correcting of all our unreasonable Complaints: The Lion, saith he, found great Fault with *Prometheus*, (the Former of all Things) and was very much vexed with him upon this Account. That though he had made him a great and noble Creature, the King of Beasts, whom none could withstand; yet he had left him with this one Defect, that he could not but tremble at the Crowing of a Cock. This troubled him so much, that he was resolved to take pet, and die. At last an Elephant came by him, who was always, he observed, shaking of his Ears, and never let them rest. Of which when the Lion ask'd him the Reason, the Answer was this: A Gnat, said he, there is, that is always buzzing about them, and endeavouring to insinuate himself; which if he do, I am in great Fear that it will be my Death. Nay, then, reply'd the Lion, I will take Courage. Why shou'd I be such a Fool, as to be discontented and die? Who am so much happier than this Elephant, *πῶς ὁ κρείττων κῶνωπος ὁ ἀλεκτρυών*, as a Cock is better than a Gnat. Make the Moral of it to your selves: I shall assist you no more than thus. You have, as you acknowledge, many and great Blessings bestowed on you: You have the Know-

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\* Lib. 2. ἐξώπων, &c.

ledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ: You have the Promises of Eternal Life, and the Hope of Glory and Honour in the Heavens. But yet you are not well pleased; and the Reason is, because one Thing is wanting: You are not so rich, suppose, as another Man, or have not that Respect which is paid to him. Now if you look about you, and cast your Eyes upon the greater Men of the World, you will find that they also are never quiet, but always in Motion and restless Agitation. If you ask the Reason of it, you will soon be satisfied that they are full of Fears, and Cares, and Jealousies; and many of them have an unquiet Conscience, and are amazed at the Thoughts of Death; and are so loth to leave this World, that they would give away all that they have got, if it would purchase a little longer Life, when they are going to depart. Why do not you then bid your selves to be well satisfied, seeing the Things you enjoy are far greater than their Possessions; but the Things you want, are far less: In as much as it is more to enjoy God, than to enjoy this World; and less to want Riches, than to want Peace, Freedom from Fears and Cares, and the Comfort of a good Conscience, the greatest Happiness of all. Nay, I should say true, if I added, That one good Friend, who heartily loves us, and takes Delight in us, and in whom we are equally delighted, is more valuable with a Competency, than all their Abundance; who therefore have no true Friends, because they are too great.

X. And



X. And now if I should pass from the Consideration of other Men, to the Consideration of all other Creatures, I might bid you ponder in your Mind, how well contented any one of them is, and therefore so ought we to be.

As for those Creatures who have no Understanding, or Power of Discourse, we hear of no Complaints from them, if they have but Meat, and Drink, and Liberty. And is it not a Shame, if no Understanding and Reason at all can make them do that, which a great deal cannot prevail with us to do? What a Mischief is it, if all the Discourse which they want, serve only to make us more miserable? Look upwards, if you please, and behold those Creatures which have more Reason than we, the Heavenly Angels, and you will find that they are well pleased likewise. They that are of a lower Rank are not discontented, we believe, because they are not equal to *Michael* or *Gabriel* the Archangels. Why do not we imitate them? seeing though we have less Reason than they, yet we have not less Reason to be contented; if it were but for this, that those very Angels are ministring Spirits for them that are Heirs of Salvation. They disdain not to minister to a poor Man, as well as a rich. They do not murmur to stand Centinel for us, and guard us (as appears by *St. Peter*) if we be in a Prison, as well as if we be in a Palace. And therefore let not us be the only unhappy Creatures; but make even this a Piece of our Comfort, that we see all God's Creatures so well provided

vided for, and so well pleased. Let us look round about us, and take great Content to see them all express such Satisfaction in the Bounty of the Creator: The little Birds chirping in every Hedge; the little Lambs and Kids skipping and dancing for Joy; and our domestick Creatures waiting with great Significations of their Confidence in our Kindness, for a Bone or some such Cast of our Alms? And the more we are pleased in their Happiness, the more we shall be disposed to be pleased in our own. That very Thought which we have of the Divine Liberality to them, will help to cure us of our Discontents. We shall be ashamed to be found the only Murmurers and Complainers in the midst of such sweet Musick and Rejoicing on all Sides: Especially since we are the only Creatures here that understand it, and are capable *to rejoice* (as God doth) *in all his Works*, Psal. civ. 31.

Is this, think you, the Use we are to make of our Reason, to afflict our selves therewith? Shall the Sharpness of Wit, which God hath given us, only furnish us with Weapons to wound and cut our selves in Pieces? That's it which the Old Poets represented as one of the greatest Follies of Mankind, and made the Matter of their Comedies; exposing it to the Laughter of all the rational World.

"Ἀπαντα τὰ ζῶντα μακάριώτατα  
καὶ νῦν ἔχοντα, &c.-----

All Creatures are most happy (saith *Menander*)  
and have a great deal more Wit than the most  
of



of Mankind. The Ass bears his Burden patiently. It's true, he is used hardly; Men lay great Loads upon his Back, and even oppress him with their Burdens: and yet he complains not, but what Nature hath designed him unto, that he endures. But we *ἔχουσιν ἀνάγκαν καὶ ὀνείδιον*, besides the necessary Evils that lie upon us, heap a great many more upon our selves with our own Hands. We are sad, if one do but sneeze; (so the Fashion then was) we are angry, if one do but speak evil of us: If a Man have a melancholly Dream, he is terribly affrighted: If a Scritch-Owl come to his Window, he is in a panick Fear: Agonies, Ambition, Vainglory, a great many other Evils we superadd to those of Nature.

But sure God did not give us more Apprehension than other Beings for this Purpose; but it was to relieve us in our Miseries, to suppress violent Passions, to silence Complaints; and, in one word, to raise us above the Degree of other Creatures, and make us more happy than any of them. And, to say the Truth, whatsoever Advantage we have of them, or of any of our own Kind, it will be of little Use to us, unless we excel them in this likewise; that having Apprehension of future Evils, as well as a quick Sense of present, we rest satisfied in the Hopes we have, and carry our Condition contentedly. This advances one Man above another; as the Ancients also have well observed, in a Number of their Sayings, to this Effect: *ἐνταῦθα ἀνὴρ ὃν ὁρῶ ἀνδρὸς διάπορον*; In this, saith Philemon, one Man is superior to another, that he knows how to take

take in good part both Evil and Good. *Ἐν ᾧ καὶ βλάστη ἐν χαλεπότητι*, saith Menander; Bear Misfortune and Mischief decently, and after a becoming manner. This is to be a Man, who hath Wit and Judgment. *Ἀνδρὸς διαφορά τῆς ἀνδρείας*—saith Antiphanes; In this the Difference between Men appears; one is unfortunate, and he adds to this the Burden of Sadness: Another Man is so too, but then he receives it prudently, and bears it well. And so ought every ingenuous Man to do, (as he goes on;) for to be fortunate is common to all, even to the most rude: But to bear it well is peculiar to Men of good Manners, and the proper Character of virtuous Persons. You can find no Man, saith the forenamed Philemon, to whom no Evil hath happened: He that makes it as little as may be by taking it patiently, is both wise and happy.

Let this be our Business then. Let us do the Work of Men, or rather of excellent Persons. Let us neither lose the Name of Men, nor the Name of Virtuous: But preserve the one by Courage, and the other by Chearfulness under all our Troubles. This is the Thing proper to Christian Men, in every thing to give God Thanks; to say as David doth, *My Praise shall be continually of thee*, Psal. lxxi. 6. There is no Estate into which we can come, but we may and ought to say, if we will be truly good, *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his Mercy endureth for ever*. If thou art sick, give him Thanks that thou art not dead. *Why should a living Man complain, &c.* If thy Friend die, thank



thank him that thou art not dead too. If thou hast but a little, thank him that thou hast not less. If thou hast nothing all, thank him that thou dost not think so; because thou hast Contentment, and canst submit to live on the Charity of others. Howsoever miserable thou may'st seem to be, thank him that thou hast thy Understanding; and that thou understandest none can be miserable, who do not want his Love and Favour.

Thank him therefore in all Estates, for the Knowledge of himself; for all his wonderful Works of Wisdom and Goodness; for all the Experience of all his Servants, and the Examples that they have left us; for his Love in his Son; for his Promise that he *will never leave us, nor forsake us*; for the Hope of Eternal Life; for the Comfort of the Holy Ghost; for the Company of his Saints; for the Assistance and Direction of his Ministers; for the Guard, Help, and Defence of his Angels; for the Liberty of these Holy Assemblies; and the happy Leisure he at any Time vouchsafes us to recount his Favours, and meditate his Praises; for all his Spiritual and Temporal Blessings, which he continually loads us withal: And resolve you will not lose the Pleasure of thinking of all this, by fastning your Thoughts only on the bodily Calamities which may lie upon you. Say, Lord, it is enough. Now that I know thee, O Blessed God, it sufficeth. What wait I for? Truly my Hope is in thee.

PRAYER

## PRAYER VI.

**O** Most High and Holy One, who inhabitest Eternity, and wast all that thou now art, and all that thou canst be, before we or any Creatures had a Being; and who always wilt be the same, though we be all turned into Nothing. Thou needest not the Songs and Hallelujahs of any of the most excellent of all thy Creatures; who only express and continue their own Happiness, when they perpetually praise thee, and rejoice in thee, and shout aloud for Joy. We cannot think of thee and love thee, but we are filled with Satisfaction; and whatsoever Trouble then arises in our Hearts, proceeds only from our knowing no more of thee, and loving thee no better. And yet that is a pleasing Restlessness, and filling Hunger; because it is a longing after thee, and tends to our greater Satisfaction in a more compleat Enjoyment of thee. So that when we respect thee, whatsoever Motions are in our Souls, they are the Increase of our Joy and Comfort. When we hate that which displeases thee, when we love that which is acceptable to thee, when we thirst and long for that which we want of thee, when we mourn for thy Absence, when we expect thy Divine Presence, when we are weary of this Body of Flesh, and desirous to take our Flight to our Celestial Habitations; howsoever we are, when we are but as thou wouldst have



have us, we cannot but find Delight in our Minds, and Ease in our Hearts.

Pardon me therefore, I beseech thee, my most Gracious God, that I have no higher Thoughts of thee, and of Religion; that I have at any time esteemed my Happiness my Burden; that I have been unwilling to be filled with the most satisfying Good; and been no more thankful to thee, for the singular Care thou hast taken of me to make me a Christian, and acquaint me with the highest Bliss of Mankind. I abhor the Thoughts of ever being again so ungrateful; and now begin to praise thee together with the rest of thy Creatures, who all confess thy Goodness, as well as they are able, for the Blessings thou hast bestowed on them. More especially I praise and thank thee, that I know thee; and that I know thee in thy Son Jesus, and understand thy admirable Love, which hath abounded to us in so much Wisdom and Prudence; contriving Ways that we may be pardon'd, and thy Sacred Majesty not dishonour'd. I thank thee, O Lord, for all the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, for the Example of thy Saints, for the Assistance of thy Ministers, for the Guard of thy Angels, for the Kindness and Care of my Parents or Friends, for the Services of all thy Creatures, for all Temporal, for all Spiritual Blessings, especially for the Blessed Hope of Immortality.

Blessed be thy tender Mercy, who hast comforted us with such glorious Expectations in this State of Misery and Mortality; and that thou hast not left us to the uncertain Guesses of our own

own Minds, but made a Revelation of thy Will to us so clearly, and with such Demonstration and Evidence of its Truth. O that my Heart may be filled with such Love to thee, and Joy in thee, that my Praise may be continually of thee. Enable me in every Condition of Life to be so contented, as to give thee Thanks, and to speak good of thy Name. Fix all these Thoughts in me, which I have sometimes in my Mind. Make me to feel the Power of those Divine Truths, which thou hast acquainted me withal. Help me so to digest and concoct them, that they may turn into the Nourishment of my Soul, and breed a chearful and vigorous Spirit in me, to do and suffer thy Will and Pleasure. I most heartily desire, that in all things thou mayst be glorified by me; and that our Lord Christ may rule in me, and bring his Government to its Height in my Soul, till I be fit for his Glorious Kingdom in the other World. I would have thy Will performed by me on Earth, as it is done in the Heavens. And I wait on thee for thy Aid and Assistance from above, to further and encourage me in well-doing; expecting thy Grace and Favour on no other Condition, than as I forgive others, and obey the rest of thy Holy Commands. Good Lord, vouchsafe me thy persevering Grace, that no Temptation in this World, nor all the Power of the Evil one, may make me go back from my Resolution to do thee all Honour in this Life, in hope that I shall at last come to give Honour, Glory, and Praise unto thee in Life everlasting. Amen.



# S E R M O N VII.

I TIM. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

**L**ET us proceed now, if you please,  
to the Third General Head propound-  
ed in the Beginning: And you will  
see greater Reason in all that hath  
been said, if you consider,

III. What those Things are, about which the  
Nature of Man is so apt to be discontented. It  
would fill a Book, to discourse of all the parti-  
cular Causes and Occasions of our Trouble and  
Sadness here in this Life; such as are Poverty,  
Sickness, Deformity, Banishment, Imprisonment,  
the Want of Children, or the Loss of them,  
Disgrace, Envy, Unkindness of Friends, Servi-  
tude, and a Multitude more: And therefore I  
must confine my self to such general Conside-  
rations, as will reach all these Cases, if we please

to

to apply them; and show that, having Food and Raiment, there is nothing of that Nature, but if we be true Christians, we may be able to bear it, if it be Evil; and to live without it, if it be accounted never so good. For all the Things about which we vex our selves, are either some Good which we would have, but do not enjoy; or some Evil which we would not have, but yet are forced to suffer. Either they are Things which we want, or Things which we would want, and desire to be without. Now let us look upon them apart, and see what there is, which our own Reason furnishes us withal, to give us Contentment in both these Cases, besides the great Supports which Christian Religion affords us.

I. And as for the former, the Things which we want, and would fain have, I propound but these Six Things, among many other that might be mentioned, to your Consideration.

1. *First*, That it is not the having of any of these Things which we desire beyond Necessaries, that will content us: And therefore we may be content without having of them, if there be any such thing as Contentment to be found, whilst we are in this World. None will be so ungrateful to God, as not to grant that Satisfaction is somewhere to be had. It is the natural Desire of all Mankind, which the good and kind Creator of the World hath not left unprovided. Now I say, that it is not to be found in the Enjoyment of those Things; be they what they will,

to



to which we stretch our Appetites and Desires; and therefore, since it is possible to have it, it may be attained without enlarging them to so great and wide a Compass. The Consequence is clear, that if when we have these Superfluities they will not fill us, but bid us seek for Satisfaction somewhere else; then we may as well be satisfied without them, in the Enjoyment of that filling Good. For it is just such a Case as this: An Horse that hath a broken Leg, or is lame, will never perform a Journey; therefore we may as well undertake it without his Company.

Now that the having of them will not do the Kindness for us which we desire, I demonstrate by Scripture, and by Reason, and by Experience.

I. As for the Scripture, the Words of the Wisest Man of the Old World recorded there, tell us; *that all Things are full of Labour, Man cannot utter it. The Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing*, Eccles. i. 8. That is, none can express the Toil and Pains that Men take, for the acquiring and purchasing to themselves these Worldly Goods; but the mere Fruition and Enjoyment of them can never give any Man Satisfaction. His Heart will be as hollow and empty, after he hath the greatest Store of them, as it was before he possessed any of them. He will find no greater Fulness in himself, than the Eye finds after it hath viewed many Places, and Persons, and Things of great Rarity and Beauty; whereby it is only invited to desire more such agreeable Objects without End. The Images, you know, of Things that slip into our  
M Eye

Eye are very thin, and small, and of no Substance; and the Sounds that pass into the Ear take up no room. They do not make the Eye or the Ear more full or less greedy, than they were before those Pictures and Motions of Air entred into them. And just such are all these Worldly Things; so poor and lean, so hungry and void of Solidity, that our Souls do not perceive themselves fuller and more satisfied after their Enjoyment, than they were before they came acquainted with them. This is justified,

2. By Reason; because these Things being finite are disproportionable to our Souls, whose Desires are infinite. And besides, being without them, and not capable to enter into them, but only by beggarly Images and specious Representments, they leave them, as I said, just as they were before, still unquiet and unsatisfied. Now a great deal of that which is altogether unlike our Souls will not more content them, than a very little of it. As the whole Element of Air will no more fill the Stomach, than that small Part of it, which is contained in our Chamber, or some such little Room. And to put all out of Doubt, let this only be considered; That if it lay in the Power of these Worldly Enjoyments to give us Contentment, and that were not a Good to be expected from something else, we should find one of these Two Things constantly true; either that the same Things would please every Man, or at least the same Things would please one Man always. But this is contrary to all the Experience of the World. One Man likes  
a pri-



a private Life, and another is affected towards a publick. This Man praises the Country, and that the City. Here we find one that admires a foreign Country, and there a Man that dotes upon his own. Nay, the same Person sometimes praises this Place or Thing, sometimes another. One Day he likes that, which another he dislikes: Which is a certain Sign, that Contentment doth not lye in the possessing of these Things, but must be fetch'd from another Spring. Else why should not a Man like this good Thing, as well as another? If you say that some Things are suited to one Man, some to another; yet still it will inevitably follow, that if Contentment were in the Things themselves, then the Thing which a Man is at any time pleased withal, he would always find the same Pleasure in. And yet, as I said, this is confuted every Day; unless a Man be virtuous, and endued with a full and strong Sense of Piety, which is a Thing that always hath the same Shape, and makes every agreeable and sweet Enjoyment to have perpetually the same delightful Relish. Other Men, in Time, grow weary of that, from which they promised themselves very much, and liked well at the first: Which is a manifest Sign, that Contentment lies in us, in true Opinions, right Fancies, and sober Desires; not in the Things themselves which we take a fancy to, and let our Desires run after. And this further proves, that if we can bring our Fancy to one Condition, as well as another; if we can but be of the constant Opinion, that such a Thing is not needful for us, and

that such another is not so evil as it seems ; then we may live contentedly, not only with those Things which we desire, but without them ; and not only when we are free from Sufferings, but when we lie under them. I must confess there is a great Weakness in human Nature, and it's very hard to be settled in our Opinions of Things. Though now, when our Mind is clear, and our Thoughts free, we can reason in this manner ; yet when the Heavenly Light, as I may call it, is overcast, and our Thoughts begin to flag, we feel our Passions and natural Desires very vehemently bent to those Things, though never so unsatisfactory, to which we have a particular Inclination. This may give us great Disturbance for the present, till we be used to reason and discourse our selves out of it. And when we cannot, we may seek to gratify our selves, if the Desires be innocent, as easily as we can. And by that time ( or before ) we see our Endeavours either successful or unsuccessful, we may have recovered our selves, and be contented either way : In an Opinion, that though such Things be very pleasant, yet they are not necessary ; and that it is more pleasant to be as God will, rather than as we would our selves. If we have the Thing, this should be our Contentment, that God would have it so ; and if we have it not, that God denied it to us. For,

3. If we further consult Experience, it will still show us, that not the Things themselves which we enjoy, but God only can satisfy us. For one, or both of these Two Things, is ever  
2
found



found true; either the Desire and Hope of a Thing is more than the Enjoyment; it appears better before we have it, than it doth afterward; or else, secondly, the more any thing pleases us, the more our Desires increase with the Enjoyment. All Worldly Goods enlarge the Appetite; they do not fill it. If we have what we want, that makes our Wants greater. For he that hath a great deal, hath greater Opportunities to get more; and he never fails to make the best Use he can of those Opportunities. When did you ever hear of a rich Man, that said he would have no more Riches: I mean, if he had nothing else to satisfy him, and was void of God, and the Thoughts of Heaven and Eternal Life. Or who takes himself to be high enough in Worldly Honours and Greatness, and doth not long to mount to a loftier Standing? Doth not the Great Turk, who hath more Provinces in his Power than he can easily go to see, still seek to enlarge his Dominions? And the like we may say of all other Things, as \* *Lucretius* truly doth:

—*Post aliud, quàm contigit illud, avemus.*

*After that we desire is obtained, we have a fresh Desire starts up for something else.* Why then are you so much dejected for the Want of such Things, as if you have, will not cure your Trouble and Vexation of Spirit; but leave you still dejected, unless you take some other Course to

\* Lib. 3.

Contentment? And if another Course must be taken, why do you not resolve upon it now, before you put your self to such Trouble, both of craving such a Number of Things, and remaining still unsatisfied when you enjoy them?

Believe, I say, but this one Thing, (which I have proved by all the Ways that any thing can be demonstrated) that what we desire to have, will not fill us when we enjoy it; and then you will see evidently, that we must take some other way to be full, than by providing to have our Desires granted. And if we must take another Way, then we may as well (or better) enter upon it now, as hereafter: And so remain contented in this present Estate, as much as we shou'd in any other; for all will be much alike.

*Secondly*, I desire it may be considered, how unreasonable it is to be troubled about that which we do not need. Now I have formerly demonstrated, that we have need but of a very few Things; and that those few are such as no Man is without: And therefore since we have them, and all other Things are of such a Nature, that we do not absolutely need them, (but they are of Courtesy, not of Necessity) we may be well pleased without them. As *Socrates* said concerning the Oration which *Lyfias*, the most Famous Pleader of that Time, had made in his Defence, *It is a most incomparable Piece, but I do not stand in need of it*; So we may say of all those Things, the Want of which is the Cause of our Complaint. They are of such a Nature, that a little of them will serve us, as well as a great deal;



deal; and that little no Man need be without, unless he will. If a Man have never such a full Table, yet he can eat no more than they that have not so much set before them. If his Wardrobe be never so rich, he can carry no more Cloaths on his Back, than they that have no Wardrobe at all. And as for the Splendor of them, that is to please others more than himself; for if they were not pleased with them, no more would he. The like you may say of all other Worldly Goods, *a little sufficeth*. Yea, many of the Ancients, as I told you, have thought, that the greatest *Epicurism* (the highest Pleasure, I mean) consists in enjoying of a few Things. And they said true, if you add this, to have no greedy Desire of more. *Epicurus* himself was wont to say, that nothing wou'd suffice him, whom a little did not suffice: And therefore he was resolved in that to rest himself, and go no farther. It is no melancholy Dream, but a certain Truth, that one may sooner content himself with a competent Fortune, than with a great Abundance. They have more to do to be quiet who have much, than they who have a smaller Portion. Which leads to the next Consideration:

*Thirdly*, It is unreasonable to be troubled for the Want of that, which if we had, would bring us more Trouble along with it. Yet such is the Condition of all those Things that we desire: If we have them, we must have all the Trouble that attends upon them. More Cares, more Fears, more Jealousies than we had before, unless we have something else beside to take all these

away. And that Thing can as well take away the vehement Desire of them when we have them not, as the Trouble of them when we have them; instructing us how to want, as well as how to abound. When a Man's Estate grows great, then so do his Wants. The Rich Man in the Parable, after a greater Crop, was in Need of greater Barns. When a Man hath a great deal of Money, he presently wants a fairer House, and that calls for a great deal of Furniture, and greater Entertainments are expected from him; and for all this, as I said, he must take a great deal of Care, and bear a great deal of Envy, &c. so that then he will want Contentment, unless he have it somewhere else; and there he may have it, before he have all these Things.

*Fourthly*, It is not reasonable to be troubled about the Want of that, which if it were not, or we did not know it, we should never feel any Want of it. And yet in that manner our Case may be stated. Suppose that there were nothing in the World more than thou hast, couldst thou not then be contented with that Portion? There is no Question to be made of it, but thou couldst. Why then art thou not pleased to be contented though thou hast not more, as well as if more were not to be had? How did Men do before the *Indies* were found out? Were they not well pleased with less Treasures of Gold and Silver? If there had been none heard of to this Day, would they have thought themselves miserable? Nay, if there had been no such thing in Nature, would they not have been contented with Brass, and



and Tin, and Iron? We need not then be troubled about the Want of such Things as Men once wanted, and yet were no poorer than they that now have them in Abundance. So Reason tells us, if we can be guided by it. If it be not in our Power to have such Thoughts always in our Mind, that may bridle our Desires; some other, it is to be hoped, will be there to do the Business. Or if they get the Reins into their Hands for a Time, they that use themselves to such Meditations will soon give them a Curb, and reduce them to Sobriety and Moderation. And let this be added as a farther Help,

*Fifthly*, No Man ought to be troubled about that, which he never the sooner attains by his Discontent and Trouble about it. If we had these Things, they cannot satisfy us; and therefore we should be satisfied without them, as was said before. But besides, if they could satisfy us when we have them, we shall be never the nearer to them, by all our Vexation and Disquiet about their Procurement. Did you ever hear, that tumultuous Thoughts and perplexed Cares have promoted any Man's Business? Do not Men succeed best, when their Minds are smooth, and their Spirits even and still? Is not a Ship most likely to miss her Port, when the Winds are high and boisterous, and the Sea working in a kind of Rage and Fury of her Waves? Just such a Thing is the Soul of a discontented Man, whose tempestuous Thoughts, and ever working and rolling Mind, are most likely to blow him away from that which he intends. The best and most  
sure

sure Way to have it, is by calm, quiet, and equal Motions, whereby he may glide sweetly and pleasantly into its Embraces. You set your self further off from what you want, by your Restlessness of Spirit. You would be nearer to it, if you was more quiet, *i. e.* contented in your present Estate.

*Lastly*, We ought not to be discontented about the Want of that which, if we had, we may instantly want again. Such is the Nature of all Things here, that as they come, so they go away: As they salute us, so they take their Leave. Let us get as much as we can of them, they will never promise to stay always with us. And therefore if we can be contented (as we must, or else be unhappy) with their forsaking us after we have them, then we may be contented without at all having of them. If we can be still when they go away, then so we may be, though they never come. For what Difference is there between the Man that never had a Thing, and him that now hath lost what he had, but only this, that it is easier commonly to be content without having it, than after Enjoyment to be deprived of it again. They that spread the Wings of their Souls to acquire so much Riches, forget that they may take themselves Wings and flee away. They that are impatiently desirous of Children, forget that they may die as soon as they are born. And they who climb up the Hill of Honour, are not mindful that there is a Descent on the other Side, and that they may tumble down to the Bottom: Or else they would be  
content



content with their present Standing; because if they go any whither else, they may return to the same Place from whence they came. And therefore if we may become again, after our Enjoyments, the very same that we are now, we may be the same now, that we must be then (or else be miserable;) that is, truly contented and satisfied in something else. Which is, as I told you, the Knowledge of the true God, and of him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ, who hath brought Life and Immortality to Light by his Gospel. To this, at last, we must betake our selves, and therefore we had as good betake our selves thither now. For else we shall only go a longer Way about; and after many tedious Windings and Turnings, after many wearisome Steps and long Journeys, we shall be brought to that, which without so much Labour we might have attained. Now we may repose our selves in the Arms of Almighty Love; now we may suck the Sweetness of his Promises; now we may reap the Fruit of all his Travels and Pains for our Sake; by constant Meditation of him, and hearty Obedience to him. If ever we be happy, it must be here: And if we will take a Circuit, and go about to come to this Point, it will only argue our own Folly, who may presently, without such Toil, nay, Hazard and Danger too, find true Comfort and Joy in our Blessed Saviour.

You have heard, it is like, the Story of King *Pyrrhus*, one of the *Nimrods* of the World, who having already swallowed many large Kingdoms  
in

in his Hopes, was ask'd by an honest Philosopher,  
and his good Friend, what he would do when he  
“ had conquered all the *Roman* Country? Then,  
“ said the Ambitious Prince, I will go and con-  
“ quer the *Gauls*. And what then, reply'd the  
“ Philosopher? I will advance my Arms, and  
“ swered the King, to the *Spaniards*, and subdue  
“ them to my Obedience. And what will you  
“ do after you have conquered them, said the  
“ Philosopher again? Then, proceeded *Pyrrhus*,  
“ I will pass over the Seas, and lay my Yoke  
“ upon the *Africans*, and enlarge my Domini-  
“ ons among those strange Nations. And what  
“ will you do after all this that you have  
“ projected, said the Wise Man? Why then, said  
“ *Pyrrhus*, I'll be quiet, and enjoy my Possessi-  
“ ons, and live merrily. That you may do,  
“ answered his Friend, as well at present; for  
“ you have fair Dominions, and a large Revenue,  
“ and need not run through so many Uncertain-  
“ ties and Troubles to seek your Happiness. Do  
“ you not see, how easy it is for you to enjoy  
“ your Repose, and please your self in all the  
“ good Things that the World affords? Why  
“ will you then trouble your self to make such  
“ a long Expedition to acquire enough? It is  
“ nearer hand, if you will mind it: It offers  
“ it self to you, without running the Hazard  
“ of your own Life, and of your Peoples; for  
“ there are none of those Nations which you  
“ talk of, that are like to disturb your happy  
“ Tranquillity. Besides this, after you have in-  
“ grossed all this, and have it in your Hands, as  
“ you



“ you have in your Fancy, it ought to be re-  
“ member’d, that there is a great Difficulty to  
“ keep it; and that if you can dispossess the  
“ Owners of it, so may another strange People  
“ come and take it all away again from you.  
“ You will still be in Fear, if you be not vexed  
“ with Desires; and so no nearer to Satisfaction  
“ after all this Toil, than you may be at this ve-  
“ ry Moment.” Just thus may we say to the  
rest of Mankind, who have a great many roving  
Projects in their Heads. You need not be thus  
busy, and cast in your Minds how to compass so  
many Things. You may be contented without  
running such a round in Pursuit of Happiness.  
That is a Thing which is in your very Hands, if  
you will but look nearer to your selves, and not  
be always fixing your vain and proud Imagina-  
tion on Things at a Distance; which perhaps  
you may never attain, but lose your selves  
whilst you are seeking other Things: And if you  
could attain them, they will still leave you as  
empty as they found you. For the Man I spoke  
of, there is no Question, would have had Desires  
as large as *Alexander*, and still wish’d for more  
Countries to conquer. Want and Necessity, we  
see by Experience, is as ordinary a Companion  
of those who are rich in Goods, as of those who  
have none at all; and it is somewhat less incom-  
modious when it is alone, than when it meets  
with Riches. For a rich Man that is needy, full  
of Cares as well as Business, full of Fears, and  
Jealousies, and such like Passions, is more mis-  
erable than he that is simply poor. And yet this  
Folly

Folly of being in Want in the midst of Abundance, is hard we find to be cured. Men still follow and gape after future, uncertain, and unknown Things, because the present and known please not, and do not satisfy them. For which the Things themselves are not to be blamed, because God hath made all Things good; but we must blame our selves for not endeavouring to be good too. Here lies the Mischief, we make our Application to all Things in an unruly and disorderly manner. We taste them with a depraved Pallate: Our Appetite is sick and diseased; our Opinions are foolish and rude, which makes us suppose the Things we now possess are in fault that they do not satisfy us, and therefore they send us to feed upon new ones: Not considering that they are all alike, and that something must be mended in our selves; and not in them, which is impossible.

We deal with our selves just as the cheating Empirick did with his Patient, when he prescribed him this infallible Remedy for all Diseases, *viz. a Dose of the Grand Elixir in the Yolk of a Phoenix's Egg*; i. e. referred him to a Medicine, which was no where to be found. Thus we promise our selves, and compound in our own Imaginations a Happiness that will arise out of such Enjoyments. We prescribe our selves a Task of acquiring those Goods, and conclude we shall be cured of all our Wants; but alas! this is as mere a Chimæra, as that I spoke of. We can never make Things meet together just as we desire them: They will not conspire and unite in such  
a Fashion.



a Fashion as we would have them, to please us and give us Satisfaction. After we have travell'd never so many Countries, and possessed our selves of the best Things in them, we shall be convinced that is not the Means to be at rest. We should sooner a great deal find it, if we would not go so far to seek it.

You will say, perhaps, as *Job* doth concerning Wisdom, Whither shall we go to seek it? Where is Quiet to be found, and where is the Place of Contentment? I answer, Every where, as I have already told you: For it is there where God and you meet together in hearty Love and Affection. And that you may be further convinced of what I have said, do but ask your selves these Three Questions, and briefly resolve them. First, What was the Condition wherein our Lord Jesus Christ was, and what was it that made him contented while he lived upon Earth? Was he rich? Did he seek to be promoted to Honour? Or gave he himself up to live in Pleasure? I need not stay to receive an Answer to these Questions. If he was a Stranger then to these Things, what was it that gave him Satisfaction, unless it was the doing of the Will of his Heavenly Father? This was his Joy, that he did abide continually in his Love by keeping his Commandments; and this must be ours also. Secondly, Ask your selves what do you suppose it is, which makes the Blest Angels contented? Have they all that is possible? Do they not want something to Perfection? Are they not ignorant of many Things? And hath not God done something for us, which  
he

he hath not done for them? And yet they are not filled with Envy, and Indignation, and such like pestilent Qualities. What is the Reason of it? What hinders them from repining, and preserves them in happy Peace and Tranquillity? That Thing must do us the same Service. But, Thirdly, Consider, Was you ever contented in all your Life? If you was, remember, what was it that satisfied you. Now a new Object presents it self to be enjoyed, which perhaps you cannot win, and get to your self; was you contented before you saw it? If so, then to that which quieted your Heart you must repair again. You did not want this new Thing then, why cannot you be without it now? Is it the more necessary because you long for it? No; you may cease these Longings by remembring, that it was not necessary heretofore; and that after all our Enjoyments, we must make our Retreat to God for full Satisfaction. The sweetest, the dearest Good we have in this World, that which we most closely and ardently embrace, will not do it; but we must make our Addresses to him, that he would fill us with his Love, and impart his Divine Nature to us, in Wisdom, Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth.

I will conclude this with the Words of Two of the Ancient Lights of the Church; the one is *St. Cyprian*, who after he had shown how far from Happiness the Honourable, the Rich, and even Kings themselves are, if they be no more, concludes thus: *Una igitur placida & fida tranquillitas,*



*quillitas* \*, &c. “ The only calm and faithful  
 “ Tranquillity therefore, the only solid, firm  
 “ and perpetual Security is, if a Man drawn out  
 “ of the unquiet Waves of the World, and well  
 “ settled in the Port of Salvation, can lift up  
 “ his Eyes from Earth unto Heaven, and being  
 “ admitted to the Gift of the Lord, and now  
 “ approaching nigh to his God, is able to glory,  
 “ that *whatsoever to other Men seems great and*  
 “ *sublime in human Enjoyments, it all lies within*  
 “ *his Conscience.* This Man is happy indeed.  
 “ What should he desire, what should he long  
 “ for in this World, who is greater than the  
 “ World?

To the same Purpose *Greg. Nazianzen.* “ He  
 “ is happy, that by Reason and Contemplation  
 “ can break through this fleshly (what shall I  
 “ call it?) Cloud or Veil, and ascending to  
 “ God, be mixed with the purest Light, as much  
 “ as human Nature is capable of it. He is  
 “ doubly happy, both by his Ascent from hence,  
 “ and by that Divine Participation which true  
 “ Religion bestows. On the other Side, that  
 “ Man is miserable, whose Soul sticks so close  
 “ to his Body, that he cannot look upon the  
 “ Rays of Divine Truth, nor lift his Mind above  
 “ these inferior Things; and so much the more  
 “ miserable, as he is abused and deluded with a  
 “ full Prosperity, *ἢ πείθεται ἀλλότῃ καλῶν εἶναι* †,  
 “ &c. and is persuaded, that there is another  
 “ Good before the true Good of all. In what

\* Epist. i.

† Cra. 21.

“ infinite Confusions will that poor Soul wander?  
 “ Now one thing will draw him to it, now another;  
 “ whilst he imagines it is that full Good,  
 “ which will satisfy his never-ceasing Desires.  
 “ Let us bless God, if he have made us in the  
 “ Number of those that understand better. Let  
 “ us begin our Happiness in giving him Thanks  
 “ that he hath opened our Eyes to see the Supreme  
 “ Good; especially if he hath drawn our  
 “ Hearts to embrace it, to chuse it, to favour  
 “ and taste it, to rest satisfied in it, as the Sum  
 “ of all our Desires, the End of our Hopes, and  
 “ the Fulness of our Joy for evermore.

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## P R A Y E R VII.

**O** God, in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy,  
 and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures  
 for evermore. We see daily, how uncertain  
 and empty all our Enjoyments are in this World;  
 and are directed by our constant Experience to look  
 up higher, and fix our Hearts on thee, for our  
 true Contentment and Satisfaction of Spirit. Our  
 Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor our Ear filled  
 with hearing; but after all that we possess,  
 our Spirits are still thirsty, and craving more.  
 The very Love of our selves, and our own  
 Ease, carries us unto thee: for we are extremely  
 miserable even in the midst of Abundance,  
 if



if we want thee. Blessed be thy Goodness, that I know thee, and thy exceeding great Love to Mankind in Christ Jesus. Blessed be thy infinite Grace, that I understand where my Happiness lies; and am not left to wander after the foolish Desires of my own Heart. O turn away mine Eyes from beholding Vanity, and quicken me in thy way. Fasten my Mind on that immoveable Bliss, which our Lord hath discovered unto us, and fill me with a constant Delight and Joy in Contemplation of it: That so I may not lay out my Strength for that which is not Bread, and my Labour for that which satisfieth not; but earnestly pursue that everlasting Life, the very Hope of which is so sweet and comfortable in this World.

Thou hast not made me, I know, to be miserable here; for thou art the Father of Mercies, and takest Pleasure in enriching others with thy Benefits. It is thy Glory to do Good: Thou openest thy Hand, and satisfiest the Desire of every thing living. The whole Creation acknowledges thy Bounty; and therefore I should be the most ungrateful Wretch, if I should not rejoice in it, which hath made me to want nothing but what I may easily enjoy, and hitherto hath supplied all my Needs with a continued Care and Kindness. Preserve me, O Lord, in a sober and serious Sense of the State of my own Nature, and of the Condition of all things round about me. That I may not stretch my Desires greedily after that which I do not need, and which cannot satisfy and fill up the vast Emptiness of my Soul, if I did enjoy it. Make me so wise as to reflect continually

usually upon the Trouble, as well as Pleasure, that I am like to meet withal in every Change: That so I may be modest in my Desires, and pursue what I desire with an indifferent Mind, and enjoy what thou bestowest on me with a thankful and charitable Heart, and with a quiet and undisturbed Spirit resign it back into thy Hands, when thou callest for it. O Blessed Jesus, as thou hast made thy self my Example, so be pleased to be my Guide. Inspire me with the same Thoughts, Inclinations, Desires and Resolutions, which were in thy blessed Nature. Help me to place my Satisfaction there, where thou livest in perpetual Peace, amidst all the Troubles and Vexations of this Life. Raise my Spirit to that great and sublime Good, which none can touch, much less remove; that remaining in an unshaken Possession of thy Love, and being lifted up in noble Hopes of the Glory to which thy Love will promote thy faithful Servants, I may not feel my self altered by any of the Changes which are in the Things that are under my Feet. Dispose my Mind, O God, to the sweetest and most gentle Compliance with thy Providence. And make me so perfectly in Love with thy Will, that all that is great, or glorious, or delightful in this World, I may enjoy in a pure and clear Conscience, void of Offence towards thee, and towards all Men. O the Delicousness of those Pleasures! O the Divineness of those Joys! Bless me daily with a stronger Taste of them and Satisfaction in them, till I come to enjoy that Reward of well-doing, which exceeds all Thoughts and Desires, through our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus; &c. Amen. SER-



# S E R M O N V I I I .

I T I M . VI . 8 .

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

**L**ET us now proceed to consider the Things which we are as desirous to want, as we are to enjoy those of which I have already discoursed. The evil and afflictive Things, I mean, that here we are forced to endure; the Presence of which perhaps prove more troublesome and grievous to us, than the Absence of the other. I said before, that since we may lose that which we desire to possess, we had as good dispose our selves to be contented without it now, as without it afterward. But some will reply, How shall we rest contented with such Losses? That is the Thing which troubles us; that we lose our Health, or our Liberty, or our Goods, or our Friends, or our Reputation. Who can support themselves under such Crosses? Would not these put any Man

into a Disorder? And do we not well to complain of such Affliction?

My Answer shall consist of these Two Considerations: One of which contains more under it, than can be easily comprized in one Sermon.

*First*, That if the former Discontent can be cured, (as I have shown there is Reason it shou'd) then the Cause of this is taken away also. If we can patiently want that which we have not, then so may we bear again the Want of that which we once had. We are now but as we were before. We knew that these Things were not to stay, and therefore it is no wonder that they are gone. We took them with the Condition of leaving them. They have broken no Promise, as I said, and therefore there is no Fault to be found. If we promised to our selves that which we ought not, it was our Folly, of which their Departure from us is the way to cure us. And besides all this, in the Enjoyment of them we could not but find, that Contentment was not in them, but somewhere else; and therefore our Contentment (if we had any) is not taken away together with them, but they leave that still entire behind them. But it may be replied, that I said it is easier to want a thing, and never have it, than having enjoyed it, again to want it. I answer, Yes, so it is, unless we rightly understand where our Contentment lies, and apply our selves to that great Good. Which if we have Possession of, we shall then be rather thank-



thankful that we had those Things at all, if they could do us any Pleasure, than repining and discontented that we do not continue in their Enjoyment. That's but a Piece of Ingenuity to God that gave them to us at all; nay, it is but good Manners to thank him for the least Favour of which we did not deserve to taste. This hath been always held a Piece of great Wisdom; first, *non tam angī, &c. not so much to grieve for the Evils that we suffer, as to rejoice that they were not* (as they might have been) *more grievous*; and secondly, when any good Thing leaves us, *non tam spectare rem deperditam, quam cum voluptate possessam* \*, not so much to consider its Loss, as the Pleasure with which we possessed it. By this means, Wise Men have tempered their Sorrows, and brought them to Moderation. Considering how full the World is of Troubles, they gave God Thanks, that no greater Number of them had fallen to their Share, and that they had any Taste of Joy and Pleasure: But this Consideration will not reach all Cases; therefore, for your fuller Satisfaction, consider with me,

*Secondly*, That all those afflictive Things which we may here endure, are not such Evils, but that there is a great deal of Good in them. They are pure Evils only to those that think them so, and dispose not themselves to receive any Benefit from them; for if we please, they may

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\* Gassend. in vita Peiresk.

be exceeding useful to us, and deserve a better Name than Evils and Afflictions.

The best Way to Tranquillity some of the Ancient Philosophers thought (after they had tried all others) was to judge nothing at all concerning what befel them: neither to pronounce any thing good, nor to esteem it evil. This was the Method of the Scepticks, as we read in *Sextus* \*; who discourses very well a good way, till he come at this Point: "It is impossible, saith he, for us to be ἀσχυλῆτοι, free from all Molestation or Disturbance. We cannot but feel Cold, and Hunger, and Pain, and such like Sufferings. But in these Cases, the Vulgar feel two Things; first, the Impression of Cold, and Hunger, and Things that cause Pain; and then, secondly, the Opinion of their own Mind about these Impressions, which concludes them to be absolutely evil. Whereas a Wise Man feels no more but one thing, viz. the former of these Inconveniences; and by not adding any Opinion of his own about them, but suspending his Judgment of them, he escapes these Things, μετρώτερον, with less Suffering, and with a more moderate and equal Temper than other Men. By this means they sought to preserve themselves in an untroubled State of Mind, in the midst of the Troubles of Life; and to make a Calm within, whilst they were tossed up and down in a tempestuous World. And so far

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\* L. 1. Hypot. Pyrrh. cap. 4, & 12.



they were in the right, that a great Part of every Affliction depends upon our own Opinion; but to have no Opinion at all about what we feel, is impossible. Therefore there is a far clearer and plainer Course to that undisturbed State and Calm of Mind, which they so much talk of\*, which is this that I am now propounding: To have a good Opinion of these Things, and not to look upon them as mere Evils. Let not this seem a Paradox, or an odd Conceit, that Sickness, and Poverty, and Loss of Friends, and such like things, which we fear so much before they come, and groan louder when they lie upon us, are really good Things for us: For it relies upon a Truth which we all grant, and therefore ought to be embraced and built upon, as a most excellent Truth it self.

It is this: That is good, which doth us good. Or if you will have it in Terms you love to hear, that ought to be accepted by us as good, which brings true Pleasure to us, and hath an Aptness in it, to give us as great a Taste of Joy, as any thing else can do. If I can prove, that the Things we call Evil are of this wholesome, nay, benign and kind Nature, you will grant, that we ought to be well contented with them, and not repine, because we suffer them. To that therefore I will apply my Discourse in these following Considerations.

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\* Ἀρχαία ἡ γαλήνη τοῦ ἡρώδου.

I. I con-

I. I consider, that nothing ordinarily makes Men more sensible of God, and their Dependence on him, than these afflictive Things do; and therefore how sharp soever they be, they have really some Sweetness in them. Like the prickly Coat which some Fruit wears, having something grateful to the Palate within. If God be the chiefest Good, then that which fills our Minds most with him, ought to be esteemed good. Now I appeal to all Men, whether their Souls are not most apt then to retire to him, when other Things are withdrawn from them. Then every body's Mouth is filled with God. Then they cry to him every Moment; and call to him as their only Salvation. And their very Hearts may be filled with him, if they follow the Direction of this Providence; which points them to him as their true Happiness. It is a remarkable Observation, which I read in *Lactantius* \*; for which he had good Reason, I make no doubt, living among those Persons of whom he speaks. "That when any Adversity befel the Pagans, they were wont to pray to God, (in the singular Number) and call upon him for his Help. But in their Prosperity, then they distributed their Services among a Number of Gods, whom they used to worship, and paid their Devotion to them all with great Ceremony. When they swear or vow, saith he, being desirous to obtain something that

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\* L. 2. Div. Instit. cap. 1.



“ they want, then we hear nothing of the Name  
 “ of *Jupiter*, or any other petty Deity, *sed*  
 “ *Deum nominant*, &c. but they have simply  
 “ the Name of God in their Mouths ; and say,  
 “ O God, be good to us. But when all things  
 “ go as they would have them, then it is quite  
 “ otherwise. *Nam tum Deus maxime ex memo-*  
 “ *ria elabatur*, &c. For then God most of all  
 “ slips out of Mens Memory, when being in  
 “ Possession of his Benefits, they ought to render  
 “ Honour to the Divine Indulgence. If War,  
 “ for Example, infest them, if some Plague  
 “ make great Destruction among them, if there  
 “ be but a terrible Hail or Tempest, *ad Deum*  
 “ *confugiant*, &c. instantly they flee to God.  
 “ Then his Help is implored, and they beseech  
 “ him to be their Friend. Therefore they never  
 “ remember God, *nisi dum in malis sunt*, but  
 “ whilst they are in an ill Condition. For after  
 “ the Fear is over, and the Danger is gone, away  
 “ they run merrily to the Temples of their  
 “ Gods, to them they sacrifice, to them they  
 “ bring their Offerings, and set Crowns upon  
 “ their Statues. But as for God, whose Favour  
 “ they implored in their Necessity, they have  
 “ nothing to say to him now. *Adeo ex rerum*  
 “ *prosperitate, luxuria ; ex luxuria vero, ut om-*  
 “ *nia vitia, sic impietas adversus Deum nascitur.*  
 “ So true it is, that out of Prosperity comes  
 “ forth Luxury ; and out of Luxury, as all other  
 “ Vices, so Impiety and Contempt of God is  
 “ wont to spring”. Doth not the Divine Wis-  
 dom and Goodness then take a great Care of us,  
 if

if this be the base Inclination of human Nature, when he sends some Cross to bring him to our Remembrance, or to quicken our Sense of him, and Devotion to him? If we are at all concerned in his Love, we cannot accuse these Things of such Malignity, as they seem to carry in them, which drive us to him, and dispose us to seek his Favour, and make us sensible that in him is our Help and our Salvation. Let us not look upon them as such Mischiefs, if they be apt to do us this Kindness; but acknowledge that he bestows a Courtesy upon us; even against our Will; and that we are beholden to him for reminding us of the first Good of all, from whom all other good Things flow, and who is able to turn all evil Things in this World into good too; as will appear by what follows. For,

II. Nothing makes us more to value the precious Promises of our Saviour, and gives us a sweeter Relish of future Enjoyments, than the Distaste we take at any thing in this World. Then we clearly see how miserable Man had been, if God had not given him so good an Hope in another Life. Then we feel how our Souls would have pined away, if we had not had such Marrow and Fatness to feed upon. And no body sure will complain, who hath a coarser Diet taken away from him, and more delicate and choice Provision served up instead thereof. One would not willingly indeed be indebted merely to an Affliction for his Soul's Health; but have some more noble Consideration, than mere Necessity,  
move



move him to be sensible of the Divine Benefits. But yet we are beholden to God, if he will make use of this Remedy, when there is no other left. And as we cannot be said to perish, if we be cast safely on Shoar by a Shipwreck; so we are not undone, if we suffer great Losses in this World, and thereby are driven to Heaven. Now I appeal unto all, When is it that we take the greatest Satisfaction in the Thoughts of the Life to come? When is it that we set the greatest Value upon those Treasures that are laid up for us above? When are we most sensible of the inestimable Love of God, in opening to us the Kingdom of Heaven? Is it not when other Things withdraw themselves, which were wont, as I may say, to stand in our Light, or to turn our Eyes too much another way? Is it not when all other Comforts fail us, and confess their Weakness and Insufficiency to entertain us with perpetual Pleasure? Then the Haven is very desirable, when we are in the midst of a Tempest. Then we bless our selves in the Joys that are set before us, when the Sorrows of Death surround and compass us about. Then we taste how gracious the Lord is, who hath made such large and happy Provision for us, when, as *Jeremiab* expresses it in his *Lamentations*, *we are filled with Bitterness, and made drunk with Wormwood*. And therefore here we are taught we must seek our Satisfaction at other times; and value those Things most, which are never greater Comforts to us, than when we stand most in need of Comfort,

fort, and our Condition calls for the strongest Cordials.

III. And now you see easily, by what hath been said, that nothing makes a truer Representation to us of the Condition of all things here, than any Affliction doth. Now they discover, how vain, how inconstant and infirm they are; how unable to support a sinking Spirit, and give us that true Quiet and Repose, which we so much seek and labour for. And is it not a great Blessing, to know where our Happiness lies; and to be undeceived when we mistake the Place of it? This is one great Cause of the Misery of Mankind, as the Ancient Philosophers have well discoursed \*, that they do not diligently observe the Nature and Quality of all those things in which they are or may be concerned in this World. “ Is it not plain, say they, that we  
 “ carry about with us corruptible Bodies; that  
 “ there are innumerable Diseases to which we  
 “ are subject; and that we are all exposed likewise to divers Inconveniences from the things  
 “ without us, from the Air, from the Water,  
 “ from the Fire, and from the rest? What is the  
 “ natural Consequence of this, but that we do  
 “ not glory in the natural Strength of our Bodies, which a little Fever can emaciate and  
 “ consume to Skin and Bone? Nor in the Things  
 “ without us, which are wont no sooner to  
 “ come than to go away? They are all unstable;

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\* Hipparchus Pythag. in Stob.

“ they



“ they are subject to many Changes and Altera-  
 “ tions ; nothing is steadfast, nothing immovable.  
 “ If we thought of this, we should more equally  
 “ bear the Change. But now we presume too  
 “ much of these Enjoyments which we possess,  
 “ and consider them *ἐν αὐτοῖς*, not as they are  
 “ in themselves, but *διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν*, &c. as they  
 “ stand before us when they are in their most  
 “ perfect State. And so their sudden Decay,  
 “ and the fading of their Beauty, breeds in us in-  
 “ numerable sad Thoughts, and heavy Sighs  
 “ and Groans. This fills the World with Com-  
 “ plaints, and makes them so miserable. And  
 “ therefore what we would not learn before,  
 “ we are taught now ; and it is high time sure to  
 “ learn it. We may improve by the Corrections  
 “ of our Error. We are instructed effectually, not  
 “ to expect more from these Things than they  
 “ can give us ; nor to take those Things for  
 “ permanent, which have no firm Foundation.  
 “ And therefore not to fasten our Eyes upon  
 “ them only when they are in their prime, and  
 “ shew themselves in their most flourishing Con-  
 “ dition ; but as Things that must shortly be  
 “ deflower’d, and lose their Glory : And conse-  
 “ quently not set our Hearts on that, which will  
 “ not stay with us ; but prepare for a Change,  
 “ and settle our Affections on some unchangeable  
 “ Good, which will never fail us.

This is the Sense and Meaning of every Af-  
 fliction. It bids us not remain always Children  
 in Understanding, but grow so wise as to learn,  
 at least, this easy Lesson : That as we our selves  
 have

have here no continuing City, so all the goodly Furniture that adorns the Place of our present Abode, hath no Continuance neither. This we might have learnt by the Miseries of others. Common Observation would have imparted to us this small Degree of Knowledge. And therefore it is the grossest Stupidity, not to have a lively Sense of it now, when we our selves are made the Examples of this Truth; and are taught it, at our own dear Cost and Charges. But it is worth all the Pains and Expence that we are at, if this Sense be settled in our Hearts by this means. We shall have Cause to bless God, that we are made wise at any rate. The smallest Degree of Wisdom being of more Use to us, than the greatest Riches, or any other Worldly Good: Which without a prudent and sober Mind, are wont to prove the greatest Mischiefs of Mankind. And truly, if we consider a little farther, we shall find,

IV. That nothing brings us better acquainted with our selves, than the Troubles and Afflictions of this Life. They open our Eyes, and make us see, that our Souls are principally Our selves: And they are therefore most to be valued, which nothing in the World can hurt, but only themselves; and which can profit by every thing, even by those which are most contrary to our Desires. They show us all our Neglects of such precious Beings; and unstripping us of all Disguizes, make our Souls appear naked to us, just as they are. Then we behold all their Faults,

I and



and clearly discern wherein they are defective. All their Spots and Blemishes are made visible; and we are sensible now of all their Wants. Our Consciences give us a true Account of what we have done amiss; and call upon us to amend our selves in the first place, before we study to repair our Losses, or remedy our Afflictions. We cannot cheat our selves any longer, nor put any Fallacies upon our Souls, as we are wont to do in the Days of Prosperity: But they deal plainly with us, and tell us we are not in the right way; and bid us turn our Feet speedily into the Paths of Righteousness and Peace. And when are we more serious and considerate, than at such Times, and so more likely to hearken to our selves, and follow the Counsels and Desires of our own Souls? Which if we will do,

V. There is nothing more apt to make our Souls of a truly noble and generous Temper, than this Exercise under Afflictions. They breed and train those up, who will be taught by them, to an excellent and Godlike Virtue. They teach us to be contented better than any thing else; and they make us able to want but a little, and that is to be nearest to God. They set our Thoughts above this vain World, and teach us with what Eyes to look upon it. They learn us Fortitude, Patience, Meekness, Courage, and all other the most masculine Virtues. Yea, what one Thing is there, that is not most effectually taught

in this School. For it disciplines us to the most perfect Submission to the Will of God. Here Occasions are presented us to win the most glorious Victories, and to triumph over the most daring Enemies. For whether was the greater Conqueror, think you, the Devil or *Jab*? The Devil robbed him of his Goods; but he kept his Patience. He threw him on a Dunghill; but he could not throw down his Confidence in God, who was his Helper. His Children, nay, his own Health was lost; but he preserved his Integrity, which was a greater Treasure. Do as he did, and you will not repent, though you suffer as he did. You will gain one way, what you lose another: And your Gains will be all in the nobler Part, when your Losses are but in the meaner.

The very Pagans were not without a Sense of this Doctrine, if they had any Sense of Wisdom. They were wont to say, when Men complained of the difficult and ungrateful Passages of Human Life; "Do you know what you would have? How would you become such brave Men, as you are ambitious to be, if you have nothing to encounter withal? Did the Heroes of former Ages come to that Glory which they won, in a soft and delicate way of living? Τί οἱ εἶ, ὅτι ὁ Ηρακλῆς, &c. Do you think that *Hercules* had been so famous, if there had been no Lion, no Hydra, no wild Men and barbarous Tyrants in the World, whom he

"grappled



"grappled withal and foild, and thereby be-  
 "came the Saviour of his Country? Consi-  
 "der this; look upon the Powers and Facul-  
 "ties, and the Occasions likewise which God  
 "hath given you to adorn your selves, and  
 "make your selves glorious. It is Baseness  
 "to sit trembling at what may happen; or  
 "to sit bewailing the Misfortunes which have  
 "happened. The next thing will be *τις δὲ  
 "οὐκ ἔγκλην*, to accuse God, and to make  
 "Complaints against Heaven. What else is  
 "the Consequence of such a cowardly Spi-  
 "rit and ungenerous Mind, but Impiety and  
 "Ungodliness? Which is the worse, because  
 "God hath not only given us those Powers  
 "by which we may bear whatsoever befalls  
 "us, with an undejected and unbroken Mind;  
 "but like a gracious Sovereign and a true  
 "Father, (I do but translate the Words of  
 "*Arrianus*) hath so put it in our Power, that  
 "none can hinder us from being thus happy;  
 "but it lies wholly in our own Breast, to  
 "become Men of excellent Spirits. Why  
 "should we not apply our selves to this, ra-  
 "ther than sit still and wring our Hands?  
 "The Condition indeed is sad wherein we  
 "are; but it need not be so long, if we will  
 "take Occasion thereby to become good, nay,  
 "the best of Men. More humble, that is,  
 "more modest, more charitable in a prospe-  
 "rous Condition when we enjoy it; and more  
 "patient, more submissive and resigned to God,  
 "more constant and undaunted, more strong

“ in Faith and rich in Hope, and more disposed to defend and justify the wise Providence of the Almighty Lord of the World, while we remain afflicted”. This let us study, and we shall not suffer, as I said, more than we gain, by any Calamity.

VI. Let it be considered also, That Afflictions and Sufferings prepare us, more than any thing else, for Death; that great Terror of Mankind. And this, I assure you, is a considerable Benefit; for the Dread of this makes even Life it self to be but a Death. They putting us upon continual Thoughts of it, bring us acquainted with it, and put us in mind to dispose our selves to receive it, and make us more willing to welcome it: We having little to leave, but that which we call Misery, which every one would be gladly rid of. But I'll leave this, and consider only one Thing more, which may be enlarged in many Particulars; and that is,

VII. The great Advantage which we may receive by these Afflictions, in order to the sweetning even of the Enjoyments of Life. By their Austerity and Sharpness, they make a grateful Sauce to all other Things that we possess. This, if it can be proved to be more than a witty Saying, will be apt to give us great Content. For what is there that we more desire, than to lead the most pleasant Life? They that look not at the Pleasures of the



the World to come, would gladly know how to enjoy as much of Pleasure as they can here; and they that do, would not willingly be without as much of it as they can lawfully enjoy. Now it may be made good, I think, that some Crosses are very useful to us upon this Account: Nay, that the most perfect Pleasure of some Kind cannot be attained without them. For,

I. First of all, this is manifest, that those Things we call evil, discover, more than any thing else, a true Friend from a false: *For a Friend* (as *Solomon* saith, *Prov. xvii. 17.*) *loves at all times, and a Brother is born for Adversity.* Now you will all grant, I suppose, that there is no small Pleasure and Profit too in hearty Friendship. It is one of the sweetest Good of Human Life. It renders all the delightful Things of this World greater, and the troublesome Things less. And therefore it is none of the Things that we imagine, (as an Ancient Poet well expresses it, in the First of *Plato's Epistles*) neither Gold, nor Adamant, nor Silver Tables glistering in Mens Palaces, nor large Possessions in Lands and Houses, nor any other Matter, which will so much conduce to the Satisfaction of Life, *ὡς ἀγαθὸν ἀνδρῶν συνομιλίαν νόστοις*, as the conspiring and agreeing Minds of good Men. This *Socrates* repeats again and again, that it is neither *συγγένεια*, &c. Kindred, nor Honours, nor Wealth, that will make us happy, but Love only. This

makes Heaven upon Earth. Which made that great Lawyer *Gerbellius* resolve, *nihil iniquius ferre Dæmonem, quod sinceræ Amicitias*, that the Devil takes nothing so heavily, as sincere Friendship: Whereby Men are made so unlike his ill-natur'd self, and provide so much for their own Safety, Security, and Delight. But the more Value we grant this is of, the greater Reason we have to desire, that we may not be deceived by its Counterfeit. One wou'd not willingly be cheated in a Thing of such Moment, on which we rely so much for our Happiness. Nay, we wou'd fain be sure that we are not cheated with Shadows and Appearances of Kindness, instead of substantial and solid Affection. Which it is hard to be, as long as we are in full Prosperity, and sail along with a fair Gale, without any contrary Blast of Fortune. Who is there that will not be willing to court the Rich and the Great? And how easy is it to frequent the Company of those that are well, and merry, and joyful? This is not the Time to know, who truly love us; but we are indebted very much for the certain Knowledge of this great Thing to some Trouble that befalls us. This is the Touchstone to which when a Man is brought, it will try him whether he be of the right Stamp. All Sorts of Affliction and Misery presently reveals to us what Friendship is sincere, and what is not. And the greater any Calamity is, the more certain the Discovery



is which we shall make. Then a grateful Person will instantly be distinguished, between a base and selfish Wretch; and an hearty Lover and an hollow Flatterer, will no longer pass under the same Name of a good Friend. In which Respect, the meanest Man in the World is capable of more Felicity than the greatest Kings: For these living ordinarily in a constant Prosperity, never know the Difference between those Men that love them, and those that love their Fortune only; and are forced to heap Benefits and Favours on those, who love themselves better than him that bestows those Benefits.

This may be some Comfort to us in Afflictions, if there were no other; but if we look a little further, we shall find,

2. *Secondly*, That they discover to us, in a very perspicuous manner, the Nature of true Pleasure. And that consists not in having, but in using the good Things of this World: And again, not in using them intemperately, but a sober manner; not in satisfying all the Extravagancies of our Desires, but in restraining and bridling those Excesses into which they are apt to run. For he that finds how uncertain these Things are, will use them freely: And he that considers an harder Condition may come, will not use them licentiously. For whosoever is intemperate, can of all other Men least brook Adversity.

3. Afflictions also make us enjoy what Pleasures we have still remaining, with greater Affection, and more Ardency. Who takes more Pleasure in his Children, than he that hath buried some? Or who loves his Friends more dearly, than he that thinks he must shortly leave them; and can then express no Tendernefs towards them, nor render them any Services? As long as we are discreet and virtuous, we may delight our selves in the good Things of this World: And if we may, it is certain the bereaving us of some of them, will heighten and quicken the Delight we take in those that are left behind. And

4. We are mightily provoked likewise by Afflictions to be highly thankful to the Almighty Goodness, for what we have still remaining with us. And what is there that hath more Pleasure in it, than a grateful Mind to God? To praise him, is the Height of Joy. To render Thanks to him, is the Pleasure of Heaven. The Blessed know no greater Felicity, than to love and bless their bountiful Benefactor. There is no other Liturgy above (as the Ancients have expressed it) but singing Psalms, and making thankful Acknowledgments to our Creator and Redeemer. Which the more we practise, the more we shall find our selves elevated above the Reach of all Worldly Things, or above the Hurt that they can do us. There is no better Antidote against the Venom of any Affliction which is

apt



apt. to enrage our Spirits, than immediately, as soon as we feel the Sting of it, to give God Thanks for all the Benefits we enjoy, and for all the Hopes we have hereafter. This will make us forget our Sorrows, or rather not perceive them so much as otherwise we might. So *Gregory Nazianzen*, I remember, tells us, that his Mother was ever wont to take great care, even in the sorest Tryals; not to utter one complaining Word, before she had first look'd up to Heaven, and acknowledged God with a thankful Heart. She would not permit, as his Words are, *οὐδεὶς τὸν πατέρα ἐν στεναγμοῖς ψάλλει, φωνῇ*, any lamentable or mournful Accent to break forth, till giving of Thanks was first perform'd. By which means she made the Complaints, no doubt, more moderate and silent afterwards; and felt that the Affliction did her the less harm. And if it be so good, if there be such Virtue in it, I am sure we are naturally taught it then, when any Affliction befalls us, which might have deprived us of all our Comforts, as well as one. And it also bids us delight ever to bless and praise God's Holy Name, which will make our Life more pleasant, than all the Enjoyments of it, without this, can do. No Part of any Day will pass away so much to our Content, as that wherein we magnify the Divine Bounty for all his Favours to us; if we do it with Affection and an hearty Sense of our Obligations. For it is as much

as

as to say, that God is our Friend; and that we bear a loving Heart towards him. Now if there be so much Delight, as I said, in the interchangeable Love of one another; you may easily judge what Contentment there is in this Reflection, that we have a Friendship with Heaven. Which can be maintained and preserved by nothing so much, as perpetual Thanksgivings to our great Benefactor, and good Offices to our Brethren for his Sake. The Excellency of the former of which I have sometimes hence demonstrated, that there was a peculiar Gift of the Spirit of God in the Beginning of our Religion, to raise Mens Minds to such a Pitch, that they might be able to conceive and utter the Divine Praises, and give Thanks to God, by singing to themselves in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, making Melody in their Hearts to the Lord. And the Excellency of the latter also, I have had Occasion to show, appears in this, that the Apostle prefers Charity before all Gifts whatsoever. It is that more *excellent Way* than any other, wherein we must be sure to tread, if we mean to come into the Company of the Blessed. After we have lifted up our Thoughts above to God in Praises, we must be sure to come down to our Brethren in Acts of Love and Kindness. And both these together raise us up to a Conjunction with God, and happily unite our Souls to him; and gratify us with  
some



some Foretastes of those Joys and Pleasures, which inseparably attend upon the Divine Nature, whatsoever it is.

5. It is not to be forgotten neither, how that the Troubles of this Life make us more willing to part with all those Things that are not yet taken away from us: Which is a Thing very requisite to render our Life pleasant to us. For it is a certain Rule, that no Man can enjoy that Delight fully, which he is in continual Fear, and unwilling to lose. These cross Accidents then may do us a great Pleasure, because they excite us to enjoy them freely, while we have them, with the greater Affection; and yet not with so great, as to dread the Departure of them. But it is time to put an end to this Meditation; let us only therefore consider once more,

6. That they are the Occasions of the greatest Pleasures in our whole Life, if ever our Condition change from worse to better again. It is a certain Truth, that much of our Felicity, if not the most, *ex contrariis ortum habet*, hath its Rise from Contraries. Pleasure is born of Pain, Joy of Grief, Riches of Indigency and Want. After we or a Friend is recovered of a dangerous Disease, then it is that our Hearts leap for Joy. After a Shipwreck is escaped, or a Victory obtained, then our Spirits dilate themselves in an excessive Measure. So it is in all other Cases; we have the highest  
Motions

Motions of Pleasure, after we have suffered something, which put all we had in Danger: And Men are not half so much delighted in what they possess, if some Trouble do not bring it, or restore it to them.

Hence it is, in all likelihood, that they who get Riches by their own Industry, and have taken pains for them, are wont more to please themselves in them, and to think themselves more happy, than they do who were born to a great Estate; when as one of them hath undergone none, and the other hath endured great Labours.

All which put together make it apparent, that no small Part of our Happiness is wont to come to us even by those Things which we term Afflictions. And therefore why should we be so much grieved at that, which is as near a Way to Happiness as any else? Something harder indeed it seems to be, than that by all Abundance and Superfluities: But so it is harder for a Man to learn his Lesson on the Lute, than on a meaner Instrument. He is forced to move both the Right Hand and the Left, and to stir every Finger, and every Joint: And yet Use makes it easy, and the Musick and delightful Sounds wherewith it touches his Ears, makes a large Recompence to him for all his Labour and Pains.

The Sum of all is this: You can never persuade a Wise Man, though but a mere Pagan, that they are blessed, or can attain Felicity,



licity, who do all they are able, *ut cupiditatem expleant*, that they may fill their Desires and Lusts: For they have no Measure, and will never be satisfied. And on the other Side, you can never persuade the veriest Fool that is, that the Chances and Accidents of this Life are avoidable, either by Skill or by Force; or that there is no Trouble to be here endured. If therefore we cannot have all that we wou'd; and there are some Things which we cannot but suffer; what shall we do? Some among the Heathen thought the best Way was not so much to seek Tranquillity, as Stupidity: To make their Minds insensible of any thing, either of Pleasure or of Pain. But they who were more seeing, discerned that this was impossible; and therefore they wisely observed, which you may be pleased to learn from them, that *every thing hath two Handles*, whereby we may lay hold on it. The one of which is too hot to be touched, but the other is tractable and cool enough. Now it is the Part of a prudent Man, they concluded, in all things that befall him, (especially in the Troubles and Disasters of this Life) to take hold of that Handle by which they may be born and carried very well; and not of the other, which will render them not to be endured. You must not fasten your Mind, that is, upon the Evil and the Damage that any thing doth you, but rather upon the Good and the Comfort it is capable

ble to afford you. Lay fast hold on that, and let your Thoughts stay there; and you will find it very tolerable. It will not be so grievous, when it doth not seem so mischievous. It will pass for a good thing, rather than a bad, and so it will seem, as long as you do not let go this Handle; but keep your Mind upon the Good it will do you. In like manner you must not catch so hastily, when any thing you wish comes to you, at the Pleasure it will give you, (that you will find without any Thoughts about it;) but take hold on the other End, turn it about and think what Hurt it may do you, if you abuse it, and be not a thankful and a sober Partaker of it.

How happy should we be, if we followed this Counsel! We should not then despise the Chastning of the Lord, nor faint under any of his Corrections; which we see may be but a necessary Discipline, and turn to our greater Good. Nor should we overjoy our selves in any of the delightful Things of this Life, or let out our whole Souls to them, for fear they should turn to a greater Evil. Remember that all Things are, as you will have them to be. According to the Handle by which you take them; that is, as you use them, so you will find them. When any Affliction therefore comes, say to your self, How shall I respect it? With what Countenance shall I receive it? Shall I entertain it  
old with



with a frowning Brow and an angry Eye, or with a dejected Look and an heavy Aspect, as if I was going to Execution? No: I will welcome it gracefully; with an humble, but with a chearful Spirit. I will embrace it as a Friend; and then be confident it will do me no hurt. I will ask it, what it comes for; and desire it to deal plainly with me. I will tell it, that I am its Disciple, and am ready to sit at its Feet, to learn whatsoever it will teach me. Surely then I shall be the better for it; and we shall part with a more pleasant Countenance than we meet. In this Spirit, if you go forth to receive it, you may expect that it will do you great Kindnesses; and the more you desire them, and the more meekly you behave your self under its Discipline, the greater Blessing it will leave behind it. It is certain, the Author and Fountain of all Good, intends it should; whose Wisdom and Goodness is so admirable, that he can make all Things alike serve his End, which is our Salvation.

Hear how an Excellent Writer, in the Days of our Forefathers, writes to a distressed Queen of *England*, to comfort her against the Storm which was then beginning to rise against her, *Quisquis verè Deum diligit* \*, &c. Whosoever truly loves God, fixes the Author of his Hope, not in the barren Sands of these fluid Things,

\* Erasmus, L. 19. Epist. 69. ad Catherin. Reginam Angl.

but on the solid Rock, which no Waves can stir, viz. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of pious Souls. Into his Bosom whosoever can cast himself with a full Confidence, and transfer all his Cares and Sollicitudes to him, who careth for us; he is quiet in the midst of Tumults, he enjoys delightful Pleasures in the midst of Troubles: Pleasures, I say, in Compare with which, whatsoever the World affords, it is but mere Nauseating and Disgust. Therefore a Soul that delivers it self wholly to him, gives Thanks no less in adverse Things, than in those that are most prosperous. Tho' to speak the very Truth, *Quod est adversum, nisi quod nobis obstat ad eternam felicitatem properantibus?* &c. What is there that can be cross to us, but that which hinders our Course, as we are hastning to eternal Felicity: And what prosperous, but that which favours and promotes it. Christ is our *Sponsus*, and *Domini*, and *Medicus*, Bridegroom, and our Lord, and our Physician. Our Bridegroom, because by his great Charity, being induced to die for us, he contracted us to himself in an Eternal Covenant of Love. Our Lord, because he delivered us from the Tyranny of Satan, by the Means of his precious Blood. And our Physician, because he alone efficaciously cures the Diseases of Men, destroying Death, and restoring Life. And he is often more propitious when he gives us a bitter Portion, than when our Cup overflows with Sweetness. He  
knows



knows what is expedient for us; and he is not asleep, nor careless what becomes of us. We judge those Things prosperous very often, which are most cross; and on the contrary, think those to be cross, which most secure our Happiness. Hereafter let us remember this therefore, that *nostrum est obsequium, sponsi judicium*; Obedience belongs to us, Judgment and Discerning belongs to the Bridegroom. All Prosperity is from him, or else it deserves not that Name; and from him comes all Adversity, which he turns either into a Remedy, or into the Gain of Piety. By that he comforts our Infirmary, that we may be able to bear; and by this he proves and crowns our Faith. To human Sense, Prosperity is more soft and smooth; but the other is sometimes more wholesome and gainful. There is no Passage to Celestial Glory, but by some Cross. It is the common Road, and therefore let us not seek to baulk it; but go on in our way of well-doing, and it will bring us to an happy End.

PRAY-

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## P R A Y E R VIII.

O Eternal God, who art the first and the Fountain Good, from whom all other Things flow. I and all Men else are but as so many little Drops from thee; yea, the whole World is but as the Drop of a Bucket, and the small Dust of a Balance, in Comparison with thy Greatness. Thou art our only Happiness, the true Joy and Rest of our Souls; and so we should feel, and not only say, were we well acquainted with thee. O what Delight! What Height of Joy would it create in my Soul (did I but apprehend what thou art) to think that thou who art so great; and needest not any thing, wilt offer thy self unto us, such poor Things, to be our God, our Portion, and our exceeding great Reward! If my Mind was deeply sensible of thee, it would be as hard to draw mine Eyes from thee, as now it is to turn them towards thee. I should never love to be absent from thee: I should sigh and mourn after thee: O how would my Soul languish in Desires to enjoy more of thee! But now in this dark and ignorant State wherein we are, alas! I can think but seldom of my Happiness. And when I do, my Thoughts  
are



are short, and raise me up but to small Glances of thee. My Meditations are, as Dreams, that soon vanish, and are presently forgotten. O what a dull and cold Image of thee do they leave upon my Heart! How soon doth all that Warmth of Love and Joy, which I at any Time feel, expire and faint away! I adore thy unspeakable Goodness, O most Blessed for evermore, that thou wilt accept of such poor Love, and Praise, and Service, as I am able to tender unto thee. And it is the unfeigned Desire and Study of my Soul, to present thee with an Heart more devoted to thee, and possessed with a Holy Sense of thee, and constant Delight in thee. I bless thee with my all, my Soul, for all the Ways and Means, whereby thou bringest thy self to our Notice, and to our Remembrance, and provokest our Love and Affection to thee, who hast the most absolute Title to it.

Thy Wise and Fatherly Providence is to be acknowledged, even in all the Troubles and Afflictions of this Life: And when thou chastenest us, we ought to confess thy Love is great, which makes the most distasteful Things to be friendly to us, and the Instruments of our Eternal Good. We are extremely indebted to thee, if thou wilt by any means be pleased to bring us more acquainted with thee, our chiefest Joy; and accordingly ought to submit our selves to whatsoever thou wilt order for

us, with bumble, meek and contented Spirits. I will never murmur, O Lord, nor repine at any thing that befalls me: I will never question thy Care of me; but always say, It is the Lord, let him do as seems good in his Sight. Join my Heart in a closer Affection to thee; give me but to taste and relish more the Words of Eternal Life; lead me but more and more into the Knowledge of my self, and all things here; carry me but above this World, and make me like my Saviour; and deal with me as thou pleasest.

I see the Benefit I may receive, even by the Loss of any thing in this World. Lord, vouchsafe me the Grace, that I may study to improve in Goodness, according to my Knowledge. And though my Nature may be apt to be impatient of many Troubles, of Reproaches offered to me by my Enemies, or Unkindness from my Friends; yet enable me to reap much Good by such evil Means, and not to think so much of what I suffer, as of what I have enjoyed, and of what, through thy Grace, I may still enjoy, and never lose. Dispose me, O God, I again beseech thee, by all Afflictions to be better acquainted with thy self; to learn to seek my Happiness in the other World, ( of which I beseech thee to give me a stronger Taste ) to see what is amiss in my own Soul, and to amend it; to improve in the most excellent Virtues, by entire Submission to thy Fatherly Providence. O that Death  
by



by this means may grow more familiar to my Thoughts; and that while I live, I may use all the Pleasures of this World discreetly and thankfully, and do the more good with that which I must shortly leave; and that when thou callest for any thing I have, I may return it back willingly and cheerfully, saying, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord from henceforth, and for ever. Amen.

8. VI. T. M.

And having Food and Raiment, let us be

content.



I am now to come to the other  
I have dwelt long  
IV. Let us consider then the Frame of this  
great World, which is so ordered and contrived  
by the Maker of it, that he who understands  
even but a little of it, will see there is no Reason  
he should be displeased at what passes in  
it.

I For first of all, that Almighty Goodness  
which brought it forth of the World, hath all  
play'd

S E R M O N I X.

I T I M. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

 T is time now to come to the other  
I Three General Heads, from whence  
we may derive Arguments for Con-  
tentment of Spirit in every Condition:  
In which I shall stay the shorter time, because I  
have dwelt so long upon the foregoing.

IV. Let us consider then, the *Frame of this  
great World*, which is so ordered and contrived  
by the Maker of it, that he who understands  
even but a little of it, will see there is no Reason  
he should be displeased at what passes in  
it.

I. For first of all, that Almighty Goodness  
which brought it forth of its Womb, hath dis-  
play'd



play'd its rich Bounty in a great Multitude of Creatures, which make up one entire Fabrick of an unconceivable Bigness. That which we call the World, is a vast Place, of such a large Circuit, and containing in it so many Beings, visible and invisible, that it is not in our Power to number them. By which you may judge presently, without any farther Thoughts, how unreasonable it is for any Man to expect, that every one of these Things should conform its Motions to his Desires, and mind nothing else but his Content. Doth such a Person remember what he is? That he is but one small thing, and that all the rest are God's Creatures, under several Laws and Rules of Motion, as well as he? How could he then so much as wish, that such an innumerable Company of Things should bend their Studies and Endeavours, only to gratify his particular Humour? May not other Men as well expect the same? No doubt of it. And yet they are of a different Humour from him, and both of them cannot be pleased together. What would you have the Creatures of God do? Must they come every Day, and know what it pleases you and your Neighbours to have done? Must they not stir for fear of disturbing you, and discomposing your Quiet? Must they desire and act nothing, till they first know your Mind? A strange Extravagance this is, to think that they should not move for fear of giving us

any Trouble: That they must satisfy your Wills, who will contrary Things one to another, and many times to our selves.

Consider, O Man, what a little Bit of the World thou art; nay, what a small Crumb of this Earth; and what a Crumb this Earth is of the whole World, which is round about us: And then tell thy self how unseemly it is, that thou shouldst imagine every thing bound to humour thee. And bid thy self not be so troubled and amazed, if in such a great Crowd of Creatures as are here, thou be sometimes jostled or pressed more than thou desirest. It cannot be help'd, but in such a Multitude, some of their Ways and Courses will not well like thee. For consider,

II. Secondly, That the World consists not only of a Multitude of Creatures, but also of a very great Variety in that Multitude. There are Creatures of several Kinds; of different Desires or Inclinations, that have very distant Ends and Designs, far remote from ours. What Marvel is it then, if in the Pursuance of these, they sometime fall cross to some Design of ours? If they put us, by the Enjoyment of that which we desired, or carry away from us that which we possess, or do not effect that which we expected from them, according to the Projects which we had in our Minds, and the Train of Things which we had laid? It is no more than Mankind is

con-



continually guilty of towards one another. Some desire that which others cannot endure. One Sort of Men esteem that beautiful, which another thinks to be disagreeable. No wonder then, if there be as great a Variety in all other inferior Creatures. And their being so; it is a great Wonder that we should expect in such a Variety of Motions, as there is in this World, to find all things fall in with our Designs, when there are so many besides ours. Away with this Folly. Let us remember, there are other Things to be pleased besides our selves. And especially let us consider, that there being such a Variety of Things, we must expect to meet with that which will please another better than our selves, and which will concur with him in his Desires, but fall cross to ours: And in this we should, if not be well pleased, yet rest satisfied. One Merchant trades to this Part of the World, and another to a quite different. That Wind then which blows full against the one, will sit exceeding fair for the other. That Gale which blows thee to a distant Shore, will send him back into his Haven. And so it is in all other Cases: That Rain which hurts the moist Ground, makes the dry and thirsty to rejoice. And that Heat which makes the sandy Ground mourn, makes the other to laugh and sing. Would we have none then to be pleased but our selves? Would we have the Wind blow every Morning

DEM 3

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ing in that Corner where we shall order it: What strange Carriage of Things would there be, if the ordering of Affairs was in our own Hands? Every Man is such a Lover of himself, that to please and gratify his own Desires, he would have every body else undone. And if they would please themselves too, how many Winds should there struggle at a time? What a miserable Confusion and Uproar would there be here in this World? It is not to be known, but only by considerate Persons, what a Combustion Men would presently put all things into, if they were their own Chusers; and could not be content with such a State of the World, as they now are in. For what better than that which will please another better than himself, and which will concur with him in his Will? *III. Thirdly*, It is to be taken into Consideration, that the World consists of Things which are quite contrary one to another. And therefore it is impossible we should be always pleased, if we will have our own Will the Ground of our Contentment. God hath made some Things to act necessarily, and there are others that move themselves freely. And among those that act necessarily, some do necessarily cool, and others necessarily heat: As among those that act freely, some are good and some are bad; there being some that chuse to use their Liberty well, and others that use it ill. Now in the midst of this Contrariety, it is scarce possible that  
a Man



Man should not suffer the \*Eols of some thing or other: Which should be born contentedly, because it is according to the Nature of Things. Would any Man have God to change their Nature merely for his Sake? Would you have him make it impossible that Men should do Wickedly? Would you have him cut out their Tongues, or strike them dumb, or take away their Malice, whether they will or no? Would you have him make the Fire, that it shall not burn; or the Water, that it shall not drown? Or would you have him presently dispatch all wicked Men, and hurry them out of the World, that they may do no hurt? Would you then let them have no Time for Repentance and Amendment of themselves? Do you not care if they be in Hell the next Moment, only that you may be eased of some Trouble and Vexation which they give you? That's very cruel. It's plain by this, how little Consideration Men would have one of another, if all things were in their own Power. It is a great deal better as it is, and very fit they should be born withal in their Wickedness; since you have other Ways to ease your selves of the Trouble you receive from them, but there is no other Way for them to be saved, but by their repenting here of their Iniquities.

This *Philo* hath excellently represented in a Fragment of a Book of his about Providence, which still remains in *Eusebius*. "We

" see,

"see, saith he\*, many times, that the Lovers  
 "of Virtue and Wisdom are in no very  
 "thriving Condition; nay, on the contrary;  
 "they are obscure and little regarded; whilst  
 "the Wicked abound in Riches, and are  
 "highly honoured, and attain even to Prin-  
 "cipalities, and the greatest Dignities. Which  
 "hath made many Men suspect there is no  
 "Providence, which takes care of this World.  
 "But let such consider, saith he, that the  
 "Governor of the World is no Tyrant. He  
 "delights not in Cruelty, Violence, and  
 "Fierceness, and such like things, whereby  
 "Men exercise a barbarous Power: But he  
 "is a King, who with great Mildness and  
 "Clemency, as well as Justice and Equity,  
 "governs his Kingdom of Heaven and Earth.  
 "Now there is no Name more proper for  
 "a King, than that of a Father. For what  
 "a Parent is to his Children who are begot-  
 "ten of him, that a King is to his People,  
 "and that God is to the World. He joins  
 "together in one, Two of the most beauti-  
 "ful Things, by Bonds that cannot be dissol-  
 "ved, το ἡγαπᾶμεν μετὰ τῆς ὑπερόψεως, Sovereign  
 "Power with the most careful Providence.  
 "Therefore you must remember, that as Pa-  
 "rents are not wont to abandon and cast off  
 "their dissolute Children; but bear with them,

This Path excellently recommended in  
 a Fragment of a Book of his about Prov-  
 \* L. 8. Preparat. cap. 14.

" and



“ and, taking pity on their Folly, pursue them  
 “ with Kindness, that if it be possible they may  
 “ recover them: So you must conceive God  
 “ doth, with the Wicked, whom he thinks  
 “ not fit presently to forsake and undo; but  
 “ rather to deal gently and graciously with  
 “ them, and, bestowing many Favours on  
 “ them, by that means win their Hearts to  
 “ him. Nay, you shall see Parents sometimes  
 “ express more Kindness, Tenderness, and In-  
 “ dulgence to those unthrifty Children, than  
 “ to the more sober: Knowing very well  
 “ that these are satisfied in their own Sobrie-  
 “ ty, Modesty, and Temperance, and have no  
 “ doubt of their Father's Love; but the other  
 “ have no Hope, save only in their Parent's  
 “ Care, which if it desert them, they must  
 “ starve. Why should not God then, *ὡς πατήρ*  
 “ *ὡς πατήρ*, being a Father of the  
 “ most Rational Understanding, take a sin-  
 “ gular Care of all Reasonable Beings, and  
 “ in a particular manner sometimes cherish  
 “ the wicked and perverse? Whereby he doth  
 “ Two Things at once, first give them *καιρὸν*  
 “ *καὶ ἐκαστοῦ*, a Time and Space to cor-  
 “ rect and amend what is amiss; and second-  
 “ ly, *τὸ ἐλεῶν αὐτοὺς μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν*, *ὅτι*  
 “ he gratifies himself by not going out of  
 “ the way of his own sweet and gracious  
 “ Nature. It pleases him to do good; and  
 “ as long as there is any Hope to do them  
 “ good by this Way, why should not he in-  
 “ dulse

“indulge them a great many of the good  
 “Things of this World; at least spare their  
 “Lives, and continue them here, that they  
 “may reform, and become better Men?”

“And for so great a Benefit to them,  
 “truly it seems very reasonable, that we  
 “should be content to suffer a little Incon-  
 “venience to our selves; some Pressures and  
 “Vexations from them for a small Time,  
 “rather than they be thrown into long Tor-  
 “ments, from whence we know of no Re-  
 “demption. We ought not to be so hasty  
 “to be rid of them; since God is their  
 “Parent, as well as ours; and he knows  
 “how long it is fit to bear with prodigal  
 “Sons, before he utterly disinherit them,  
 “and cast them out of his Love. Upon  
 “this Account, if there were no other, there  
 “is great Cause we should be satisfied, and  
 “our Discontents are unreasonable. But be-  
 “sides we are to consider, that God can  
 “make use even of Mens Wickedness: Nay,  
 “there is great Use of it; if it be but to  
 “punish such Murmurers and Complainers  
 “as these discontented Persons are, who wou’d  
 “have all the World, and God himself, only  
 “study how to humour them.

For Shame let us learn to satisfy our selves  
 in all things; and not expect that God shou’d  
 make the World anew for our Sakes. If  
 some Men can use their Liberty so ill, as to  
 do harm; let us shew that we can use ours  
 well;



well: And that will be, by not doing them hurt through Revenge, nor our selves hurt through Discontent. Say, Let it be as the Maker of the World would have it. Let his Creatures go their own Way. Let them follow his Orders and Directions; and I will follow them too. There is not any Saying of Wisdom more Ancient than that, *Eni Oeo, follow God.* And it was so much admired, and that justly, by the Old World, that they contended who should have the Honour to be the Authors of it. The *Greeks* ascribe it to some of their Seven Wise Men. Others father it upon *Pythagoras*; and others will have it, that he stole it out of *Homer*, who hath Words to the same Effect, — *οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο θεῶν.* But *Philo* confidently entitles *Moses* to it; and says expressly, that it was a Counsel of his. But it is no matter whose it was at first; let every one of us make it ours, by conforming to his Motions, and complying with his Desires. Let us say, as that Excellent Man *Epictetus* did, *οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο θεῶν, &c.* — “I will adhere to him, as a  
 “Servant of his: I am but his Lacquey, or  
 “Follower, to attend his Motions. I go for-  
 “ward together with God. I desire with  
 “him. I simply will together with him.  
 “What he would have, that I would have  
 “also, and nothing else. *Non pareo Deo, sed*  
 “*assentior*, (as *Seneca* speaks:) I do not  
 “merely obey him; but I assent and agree  
 “to

“to him. I am of his Mind; I follow him  
 “heartily, and *ex animo*, not merely because  
 “I must. This is the Way to be dutiful  
 “and happy both together: To please God,  
 “and to please our selves. Thus we may  
 “enjoy full Satisfaction; but otherwise we  
 “shall be miserable.

I suppose none will be so bold as to say,  
 But might not God have made Things other-  
 wise? Might he not have made it impossible,  
 that we or any thing else should do our  
 selves or others harm? Yet lest any should  
 have so much as a Thought arise or remain  
 in them to that Purpose; let us pass to the  
 next General Head: And

V. Consider what God is, and what he  
 doth; and that will give us the most solid  
 Foundation of Contentment and Heart's Ease.

I. And here let us first remember, that  
 God needed not have made any thing at all:  
 And so you might never have been, nor any  
 thing else to be enjoyed, of which you are  
 Masters, or in a Possibility to attain. Can you  
 think it better never to have been at all,  
 especially since you are capable of knowing God,  
 of living immortally, and of enjoying him for  
 evermore? If not, rejoyce then in what you are.  
 Thank him that you are brought into Being,  
 and that you are endued with the Knowledge  
 of him, and of Eternity; and have any Hopes

to



to pass it happily. But do not complain, that you are in Want of any thing at all here; for you might have wanted even your selves. Which of you that are discontented, are willing not to be? Nay, is not this one Cause of Mens Discontents, that they fear Death; though it be not the End and Extinction of their Being neither? Can you neither be pleased with a Being, nor without it? How strangely do you use your selves; that you would not willingly leave the World, and yet cannot stay contentedly in it? Is it not very perverse, to hang back when you are to go away, and yet not to be thankful during your Continuance here? Remember always, you might have been so far removed from all Power of being discontented, that you might not have had any Being at all. That Condition you do not like; therefore like this wherein you are.

II. Consider again, That God having made you and the World, he is the Governor and Ruler of all things. He hath Power to dispose of the Work of his Hands, as he pleaseth: And therefore why do you murmur that you can make your selves no better, seeing you did not make your selves at all? If you had formed any thing, would you take it well, if it should complain, that it is no better than you pleased to make it? As little Reason there is, that you should repine

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at that Condition, wherein God your Creator hath placed you: And you may as well be angry and quarrel because you are not Angels, as because you are not richer, or more honourable Persons. And so when we lose any thing in this World, it is mere Forgetfulness of God, who hath the Disposall of Things in his Hands, to afflict our selves, and fret for the parting with that which was none of our own, and so we had no Right to keep. We are God's Tenants, and he may turn us out of all, when he thinks good: And that he doth not turn our Souls out of their Dwelling, is only his Favour. We are just like silly Children, that rejoyce when they see the Fruit which their Father's Orchard yields, and the Corn that grows in his Field, thinking that all this is his Land, and when he is dead shall be theirs: But when they are grown up, finding that nothing is theirs, but the Fruit of their Labour and Sweat, (the Ground belonging to their Lord) they begin to be no less sad and full of Trouble and Care, than before they were pleased and full of Joy.

So, I say, it is with us: We think in our own childish Imagination, that all the Goods we have are perfectly our own; and so we count our selves happy: But when the true Owner of them requires them again, and calls in the Lease that he hath let us, and makes us understand (seeing we would not know it  
other-



otherways) that we are not Lords of what we enjoy; then we begin to grieve, and lament, and complain, seeing our selves so sadly confuted. But this we ought to have considered before, and daily it should have been in our Thoughts; whereby we might have prevented this Misery, and not have grieved at all. However, it is never too late to be wise. Let us grow to the Understanding of Men, as soon as we can; and that will save us from all childish and weak Complaints, for the Time to come.

III. And, *Thirdly*, Consider that it was not only his Power whereby the World was made, but his great Goodness. And therefore, as he is the Lord and Disposer of all things, so we should consider that he hath a tender Care of them. He that was so good as to create the World, cannot but be so good as to provide for every thing that he hath made; and especially for the very best of Things. Can you be so injurious to him, as to think that he hath made Wolves, and Dogs, and Cats, to be better satisfied than the most Noble Beings, in whom there is an Image of himself? No, the very Knowledge of his Goodness is enough to content and quiet us, if there were nothing else. This assures us, that nothing passes here in this World, but what comes out of the most tender Compassion to us. Children cry and

whine lamentably, we see, when their Parents take from them that which they know is hurtful for them; and when they will not suffer them to have that which they passionately long for, and have set their Hearts upon: But the Parents are well satisfied notwithstanding in what they do, and see no Reason to relent; knowing very well that their Children would be well satisfied too, if they were but grown up to the Age of Wisdom and Understanding. All that we have to do, is only to understand that God is our Father; that he exercises a singular Care over us: And then though we lament and bemoan our selves before we know this, afterward we shall be well pleased; nay, very glad that we have such a loving Father to chuse for us.

IV. And not only loving, but very wise too: For you must consider, (as the *Psalmist* speaks, *Psalms* civ. 24.) that in Wisdom he made all things. He created them in such a beautiful Order, that when he look'd upon the Works of his Hands, still as he made them, it's said, he *saw that they were good*. And at last he expresses his great Satisfaction in them, when they were compleated, in these Terms; *He saw that they were very good*. Do you imagine then, that his Management of all these Things ever since, is less wise? Cannot he keep them in as good and comely Order, as they stood when they came out of his Hands? Who can think that  
he



he can please himself, in letting Things be tumultuously huddled together, and tumbled all on Heaps, in a confused and disorderly manner? No, howsoever they may seem to us; no question he beholds them so well placed, that they cannot be in better Order. If any thing use its Liberty of Motion ill, and break its Rank, still it cannot get out of the Verge of his Wise Providence, nor go as far as it list it self; but is bounded and limited by him, and also governed and over-ruled to serve some excellent End. Why then should not we like that, which we are sure is more wisely done, than we could do it our selves? Why should we desire a Change, if we did believe that it is a foolish thing to desire it? And so it is, if we believe the Wisdom of God interposes in our Affairs; which none I suppose doubts of, who believes there is a God. If he had abandoned the Government of the World, and committed all things to Chance; then we might have some Colour for our Complaints. And yet, to what purpose wou'd it be to complain of that, which could not be help'd, but only by the same Chance. But now that we are sure God doth not leave the World altogether to go as it will, but presides and rules over all Affairs, there is not the least Shadow of Pretence for our murmuring: It being to find Fault with God, and to applaud our own Wisdom, as better than his. Lay these Two

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Things together, and see what Satisfaction arises from them. God is infinitely Wise, and therefore cannot but see what is best for us: And he is infinitely good, and therefore must needs bestow that which his Wisdom sees to be best for us. He is so skilful that he cannot judge amiss; and he is so gracious, that he cannot go against his own Judgment, and send us that which his Wisdom did not think to be most fit. He is not so weak as not to discern the best Things, and the best Times and Seasons for us; nor is he so envious as to give us worse, when he knows that something else wou'd be better.

V. To this, add the Consideration of the great Power of God; and it will give you high Satisfaction in all Events. For (as I have discoursed, when I treated on this Attribute) nothing can do us good without him, and therefore why should we so eagerly desire it; and nothing can do us hurt without him, and therefore why should we be so afraid of it, or troubled about it: I mean, the Operations of all things depend upon the Almighty's Pleasure. Nothing can work, but as he will command, or suffer it. Be it never so good and valuable in our Esteem, it cannot do us the least good, if he withdraw his Power from it. And be it never so evil in our Account, it cannot do us the least evil, if he suspend the Virtue which gives it all its Strength.

Strength. What need we trouble our selves then about any other thing, but only this; to stand right in the Thoughts of God, and to be in his Favour and Love? If this be obtained, we are sure of the Favour of all things. For they all serve his Will; and can neither do us hurt nor Pleasure, but as he will let them. You may desire many Things, if you please; but none of them can do you a Pleasure, unless it please him; and if it do please him, then you need not trouble your selves to desire them. And so you may dread many Things, and be troubled for them; but they can do you no Mischief, if he be not displeased. Secure but that, and they shall either not come, or not do you such harm as you imagine. Creatures do not act always either as they will, or as we will. They cannot do us that Good, which we would; nor can they do us that Evil, which perhaps they would. All their Activity and Force depends on an higher Cause: He abates it, or hinders it, or quite destroys it, as he pleases. His Favour therefore, I say again, we should make it our Study to attain; and in that we should be confident, secure, and undisturbed, whatsoever happens to us.

VI. So we shall be disposed to do, if we consider further the Infinity of God, and how highly he is above us. If we had but this one Thought continually in our Mind, it



would be sufficient to assure us, that it can be no Pleasure to him to see us miserable, and to triumph in this, that he can trouble us when he pleases. Alas! he is so high, that it is no Glory to him to oppress any of his Creatures, if he had any mind to it. If we should wholly set aside all Thoughts of his Goodness and his Wisdom, yet even the Infiniteness of his Essence doth abundantly secure us from any such Suspicions, that he designs to raise himself a Glory out of our Unhappiness, Misery, and Discomfort; or thinks of showing his Power and Mightiness in making us complain under the Weight of any Pain or Trouble that he lays upon us. It would have been a strange Weakness in *Domitian*, if he should have triumphed in his killing of Flies, which was his daily Exercise. But it would be far more out of the way, if we should impute such a Weakness to the Almighty Boundless Being, as to think that he delights in treading us under his Feet, and keeping us in Affliction. For a Fly may better compare with the greatest Prince, than we, or the greatest Prince on Earth, with the King of Heaven. We may be sure then from hence, that what comes to pass, is not done merely out of his Will, but out of his Counsel and Infinite Wisdom; in which, as I said before, there is the greatest Cause that we should be well pleased. Nay, there is infinite Reason we should be contented, because there

there is infinite Reason for what is done. It is the highest Reason in the World, by which it is governed. It is the Result of an Understanding that comprehends all things at once. And therefore what he resolves is the more to be embraced, because it is the Conclusion of Infinite Counsel, and Infallible Judgment.

It follows indeed from this Consideration of the Infiniteness of God, that we cannot comprehend all the Reasons of his Government. *His Wisdom is unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out. The Judgments of God* (saith the Psalmist) *are a great Deep*, Psal. xxxvi. 6. or a vast Abyss. And so the Reasons of several Things, as St. Basil discourseth upon these Words, (in Psalm xxxiii.) *are unconceivable, and cannot be fathomed.* Ἐν μόνῃ τῇ τῷ Θεῷ γινώσκῃ, &c. “The Reasons by which God  
 “ administers all things, lie in his own Know-  
 “ ledge alone, and we cannot find them out.  
 “ Therefore though thou enquirest, saith he,  
 “ why the Life of a Sinner is prolonged  
 “ many times, and the Days of an Excellent  
 “ Man are cut short? Why the Unrighteous  
 “ flourish, and the Righteous are miserably af-  
 “ flicted? Why such a Child is snatch’d away  
 “ before he comes to Perfection? Why Wars,  
 “ and Shipwrecks, and Earthquakes, and  
 “ Droughts often happen? Why so many things  
 “ are created, which are destructive to Man-  
 “ kind? Why one is born Free, and another  
 “ a Slave?

"a Slave? One Rich, and another Poor?  
 "Why a poor Maid is sold to an impious  
 "Master, and thereby the most precious Jewel  
 "is endangered? Yet remember, the Judgments  
 "or Counsels of God are a great Abyfs. Some-  
 "thing we may say; but the deep Reasons  
 "of these Things are lock'd up in his Trea-  
 "sures, which our little Understandings can-  
 "not open.

This let us always acknowledge; but yet  
 when this is done, there are Two Things which  
 will manifestly follow from hence, which must  
 likewise be acknowledged. First, That we ought  
 to be so modest, as not to censure God's Go-  
 vernment, nor charge any Passage of Providence  
 with Injustice, or accuse him of any Partiali-  
 ty and ill Management; much less admit any  
 Suspicion, that there is no Providence at all.  
 We should remember in these Cases, that as  
 his Wisdom is infinite, so is his Goodness  
 likewise: And therefore there is a good End  
 of these Things, for which we can give no Rea-  
 son. The Good he designs is as much out  
 of our Reach, as the Reason by which he  
 acts. And therefore it doth not become us,  
 considering our shallow Apprehensions of both,  
 to pass any Judgment upon either; or to de-  
 sire to have the ordering of our Affairs in  
 our own Hands. " But, as the same Person  
 expresses it, in a Letter of his to a Friend in  
 great Affliction, "since all things are dispensed  
 "by a very Wise Governor, who hath with-

" al



“ al a Love for us, we ought ever to accept  
 “ them, though they be troublesome to us,  
 “ and the Reason why they come, be hidden  
 “ also and kept to himself. And that is the  
 Second Thing which follows hence, That in  
 all Reason we should submit with great Hu-  
 mility, and with patient and quiet Minds, to  
 whatever befalls us, though we know not the  
 Bottom of it. Nay, for that very Reason we  
 should submit; because Things are disposed by  
 a deeper Wisdom, and a more boundless Love,  
 than our own. This was *Job's* Case. He  
 could not comprehend the Cause why he  
 was so afflicted in his Goods, in his Children,  
 in his Body, and in his Friends: Who, instead  
 of giving him some Relief, added to the Great-  
 ness of his Calamity. Yet he did not mur-  
 mur; but received with a very submissive  
 Mind whatsoever came from those Hands,  
 which had bestowed on him so many Bles-  
 sings. This the same Admirable Writer (in  
 a Sermon of his concerning not adhering to  
 the Things of this Life) hath thus expressed.

“ Let none of you, from what he hath suf-  
 “ fered, imagine either that there is no Pro-  
 “ vidence which governs and moderates our  
 “ Affairs, or presume to accuse the Dispensations  
 “ and Decrees of our Supreme Lord. But let  
 “ him look to that great Champion *Job*; and  
 “ he will teach him to be a better Judge.  
 “ Let him first of all recount, in order, all the  
 “ Afflictions which befel that Person, and then  
 “ consider how he behaved himself.

“ *First,*

“ *First*, You remember how he was by several Means despoiled of his Goods, and left  
 “ a naked Man, who just now had such an  
 “ Abundance. How did he receive these Tidings?  
 “ Just as a Rock receives a great Wave, which  
 “ turns into Froth by beating against it, and  
 “ leaves the Rock immoveable. He doth not  
 “ complain; no, nor say a Word that we read  
 “ of, notwithstanding these Disasters. If he  
 “ opened his Mouth, we may well presume  
 “ it was in those decent and becoming Words,  
 “ which we read in the Conclusion, *The Lord*  
 “ *gave, &c.* Well, but there comes one that  
 “ told him a most lamentable Story concerning  
 “ the Death of all his Children. At  
 “ this, it’s true, he rent his Garments; and  
 “ it is the first Expression of his Grief that  
 “ we meet withal, in Compliance with the  
 “ Passions of Nature, and to declare himself  
 “ a most tender Father. But he set some  
 “ Bounds to his Grief, and adorned what had  
 “ happened with those pious Words; *Naked*  
 “ *came I out of my Mother’s Womb, and naked*  
 “ *shall I return thither: The Lord gave, and*  
 “ *the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the*  
 “ *Name of the Lord.* As if he should have  
 “ said, I was called their Father, as long as  
 “ he that made me so pleased. But now he  
 “ hath taken away this Crown of Children  
 “ from my Head, and it is not fit for me  
 “ to contend and dispute with him about his  
 “ own. Let that be which seems best to the  
 “ Lord.

“ Lord. He was the Former of them, I  
“ was but the Instrument. Why should I,  
“ who am but a Servant, foolishly complain  
“ of my Master, and repine at that Decree,  
“ which I cannot alter ?

“ With such Words as these that righteous  
“ Man wounded the Devil, and, as one wou’d  
“ say, shot a Dart through his Heart. This  
“ perhaps was it that enraged him: And there-  
“ fore seeing him still a Conqueror, he made  
“ an Assault upon his Body : Which he turned  
“ into Corruption ; and made it become such a  
“ Bag of Worms, that from a Throne it was  
“ cast upon a Dunghil. And yet the good  
“ Man remained immoveable ; and when his  
“ Body was torn, he preserved still the hidden  
“ Treasure of Piety in his Soul, of which the  
“ Devil could not rob him. At last his dearest  
“ Consort became an evil Counsellor to him,  
“ being impatient any longer to behold his  
“ Misery. How fruitless, said she, is this Piety,  
“ if this be the Conclusion of it ? What a la-  
“ mentable Reward is this, of all thy Offerings  
“ and burnt Sacrifices ? It is the wisest Way not  
“ to see thy own Unhappiness and mine any  
“ longer ; nor by an unprofitable Patience pro-  
“ long so great a Calamity. There was no-  
“ thing more offended him than these Words,  
“ as you may read in the Story. They pro-  
“ voked his Spirit to a greater Indignation,  
“ than any of the foregoing Mischiefs could do.  
“ Infomuch that he burst forth into these  
“ sharp



"sharp Expressions, that she talked *like one of*  
 "the foolish Women; and not as became one of  
 "her Wisdom and Gravity, which we may  
 "suppose she had hitherto preserved. Com-  
 "pose your self, saith he, and consider better  
 "what you say. *What? Shall we receive*  
 "good at the hand of God, and shall we not  
 "receive evil? Remember all the past Happi-  
 "ness which thou hast enjoyed. Oppose  
 "those better Things to these worse. No  
 "Man's Life is altogether of a piece, or free  
 "from all Misery. To *διὰ πάντες εὖ περὶ τὴν*  
 "*μὲν δὲ;* to be always happy as we would,  
 "belongs only to God. If thou art grieved  
 "at what is present, look back, and comfort  
 "thy self with what was before. Now thou  
 "weepest, but before thou didst laugh. Now  
 "thou art poor, but there was a Time when  
 "thou wast rich. Thou drankest of the pure  
 "Fountain of Life; drink now the more pa-  
 "tiently of the troubled Waters. Behold the  
 "Rivers; their Streams are not every where  
 "clear. And our Life, thou knowest, is like  
 "to one of those Rivers, which slide away con-  
 "tinually, and oftentimes is full of Waves,  
 "which come one upon the Neck of another.  
 "One Part of it is pass'd by, and another is  
 "running on its Course. This Part of it is  
 "gushing out from the Fountain; and another  
 "is coming after it, when that is gone. And  
 "we are all making great Haste to the common  
 "Sea; Death, I mean, which swallows up  
 "every

“ every one at last. If we receive good from  
“ the Hands of the Lord, shall we not bear  
“ Evil? Think of that again. Shall we go  
“ about to compel the Judge to supply us for  
“ ever with the very same Thing? Shall we  
“ teach our Lord and Master, after what manner  
“ he shall govern our Life? He hath the Power  
“ of his own Decrees. As he will, so he ap-  
“ points our Portion to us. But we know that  
“ he is wise; and that he measures to his Ser-  
“ vants, what is most profitable and commodi-  
“ ous. Do not curiously pry into the Coun-  
“ sels of thy Master. Only take in good Part,  
“ what is ordered by his Wisdom. Love his  
“ Administration. Have an high Opinion of  
“ his Management: And whatsoever he gives,  
“ receive it with Pleasure. Declare in a mi-  
“ serable Condition, that thou wast worthy of  
“ thy former Happiness in a better.

“ This *Job* said; and in this manner he repel-  
“ led the Enemy once more, who thought to  
“ wound him by the Hand of a Friend. Thus  
“ he compleated his Victories, and the Devil  
“ fled quite away from him. And what then?  
“ How did this Matter conclude? Why, the  
“ Disease fled away too, as being able to do him  
“ no harm. His Body returned to Youth again.  
“ His Estate also flourished, and was restored to  
“ him: Nay, his Riches were increased, and  
“ flowed into his House so plentifully, that they  
“ were double to what they were before. First,  
“ that he might lose nothing by his Affliction:

“ And Secondly, that he might have a merciful  
“ Reward of his Patience under it. Therefore  
“ it was that his Horses, and Mules, and Camels,  
“ and Sheep, and all the rest of his Revenue  
“ were doubled; only his Children were no  
“ more than equal to the Number he had be-  
“ fore, Seven Sons and Three Daughters. The  
“ Reason was, because his Beasts indeed perished  
“ entirely; but the better Part of his Children  
“ still lived, when they were taken from him.  
“ And therefore being adorned again with as  
“ many Sons and Daughters as he had before,  
“ he had a double Portion of them also: Those  
“ who were here, and those who expected him  
“ in the other World. Behold then, what good  
“ Things this *Job* heaped up to himself by his  
“ patient Submission to God. And do thou  
“ therefore, if thou feelest any thing trouble-  
“ some and grievous to thee, bear it constantly,  
“ and soften the Grief with these better Thoughts.  
“ Lay the Passion asleep, as one may say, with  
“ such comfortable Reasons. Charm thy self  
“ into a pious Belief, that all shall be well at  
“ last. Do not doubt of it; but how black so-  
“ ever the Cloud be, look beyond it; and re-  
“ joyce in him, who made *Job* glad with the  
“ Light of his Countenance. He will not aban-  
“ don thee; and therefore, according to what  
“ is written, *cast all thy Care upon the Lord,*  
“ *and he shall sustain thee.* To him be Glory  
“ for ever. *Amen.*

To



To this Purpose that Great Man speaks; and I shall add nothing more to his Words at this time.

## P R A Y E R IX.

**O** Eternal God, who only hast Immortality, and dwellest in such unapproachable Light and Glory, as our cloathed Spirits cannot behold, nor enter into its Brightness. If we can at any time look out of our Bodies, and see beyond this World, and have some little Beam of that Light communicated unto us; we can apprehend nothing so beautiful and attractive, nothing so satisfying and contenting, nothing so delicious and ravishing to our Spirits. It even invites them to quit these Bodies, and makes us willing then to go from hence, that we may be with thee.

It is thy Goodness which hath imparted such a Capacity to us, that we may understand thee in some measure, and the Things that thou hast made: Which all represent, to our great Admiration and Delight, thy Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and Infinite Majesty, in their vast Numbers and comely Variety wherein they stand or move. It is but fit that we should absolutely submit ourselves unto thee, who art so great; and that we should never in the least dispute thy Orders, who

R

couldst

couldst contrive such a mighty Fabrick as this, and who supportest and governeest it continually in an admirable Constancy. Behold, O Lord, in a firm Belief that thou art, and that thou art most perfect; in an high Admiration of thee, and an unfeigned Desire to agree with thee, I yield up my self to follow thy Counsels, to obey thy Orders, and to endure whatsoever it is thy Pleasure shall befall me in this World. It is by thee alone, that I or any other Creatures have a Being. And I know thou art so good, that thou hast not made me to be miserable. And that thy Wisdom is so great, as to be able to bring the greatest Good out of that which seems most to prejudice my Happiness.

I adore thy Power; and trust my self in the Arms of thine infinite Mercy, which embraces all Creatures. I believe that thou who art so incomprehensible, canst not please thy self in grieving such poor Things as we are; who, if we were greater, have no Power to resist thy Will. Imprint these Thoughts, O Lord, so deeply in my Mind, that I may ever reverence thee; and give thee my Thanks, that I have a Being, and am capable of Immortality; and rejoyce that I live under thy wise and good Government; and acknowledge thee in all the good Things that I enjoy, which can do me no good without thee; and humbly hear thy Chastisements; which cannot hurt me, whilst my Mind and Heart is fix'd on thee. Enlarge my Thoughts beyond my self, that I may be well  
2  
pleased,

pleased, if others gain by that which is my Loss. And help me especially to desire the Eternal Happiness of Mankind, and to rejoyce in thy long-suffering and patient Charity even towards those who are evil: Nothing doubting, but that thy Fatherly Love will have a more tender Regard to me, while I endeavour to do good.

O that the same Spirit may be in me, which was in those holy Men, who have left us an Example of Contentedness and Patience: That I may not only commend them, but imitate and follow them, as they were Followers of thee, and of our Lord. Fix my Mind so steadfastly on thee, that it may be my constant and unmoveable Will to follow thee, whithersoever thou leadeest me. And possess me with such a deep Sense of thy unsearchable Understanding, that I may neither presume to judge thy Providence, nor be so foolish as to distrust thy Conduct, or murmur at thy Appointments: But still remembering that thy Judgments are a great deep; all the Displeasure, and Disgust, and Sorrow, and Grief, and Fears, and Cares, and other troublesome Passions that are apt to arise in my Heart, may be swallowed up in the Thoughts of thy infinite Wisdom, and no less infinite Love.

I have the greater Reason to submit my self with an humble Confidence in thee, considering all the Good that I have received already from thy Bounty. Thy Benefits are innumerable; so that if I should spend all that Time, which I am too ready to waste in Complaints, in recounting thy



*Favours, I should not be able to come to the End of them. O God, raise my Spirit more and more to that Heavenly Employment. Let the Remembrance of thy Mercies be ever dear and sweet to me. And let not the Bitterness of any Affliction, ever make me to forget the Sweetness of them; but rather excite me to show my self more grateful to thee, that I was not always so afflicted. I commend both Soul and Body unto thy Care and Blessing; not knowing to what thou hast reserved me: but resolving still to say in every Condition, The Lord is good, and doth good. Let it be as seemeth good in his Sight. And blessed be the Name of the Lord. Amen.*

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# S E R M O N X.

I T I M. VI. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment, let us be  
therewith content.*

VII. **I** ought to be considered also,  
that God is exceedingly pleased  
in all his Works, and therefore  
so ought we to be. This Con-  
sideration takes its Rise from the certain Notion  
we have of the Happiness of the Divine Nature;  
and the perfect Felicity and Bliss, which is in-  
separable from the supereminent Perfections of  
it. All they who conceive there is a God, at  
the same time have a Conception, that he is  
most perfect; and consequently most happy and  
blessed. And therefore we may be sure, that he  
neither can be troubled from any thing else;  
nor will he ever trouble himself, or have the  
least Discontent. Which is a Demonstration,  
that the World is governed according to the best

Counsel and Wisdom; and that the Course of it goes in the most excellent manner: For he cou'd not be well pleased and happy, if all things did not go handsomely, in a most sweet Harmony and perfect Agreement to his most excellent Nature. He could not, I say, give himself Satisfaction, if those Things that he doth (and I told you he governs the Affairs of this World) were not managed with so much Skill, and so much Goodness; that, all things considered, there could not be greater expressed. And therefore the *Psalmist* saith, *The Lord shall rejoice in his Works*, Psalm civ. 31. That is, As in the very Beginning of the Creation, he did, as it were, show himself highly pleased in what he had done, and said that all was *very good*: So still in the Carriage of Things ever since, in all his Acts of Providence, he takes the like Pleasure; and sees that all things are so disposed, as will be most conformable to himself, and yield him still the same Delight and Joy.

Is it not a great Folly then in us, that we should not thankfully take our Share in that Divine Joy; but trouble our selves about that, which God himself cannot do better to his own Satisfaction? For if he could, it would be done; because he could not be perfectly happy, till he had done what is most pleasing to his own most perfect Mind and Understanding.

Whatsoever then we poor Idiots think, according to our small Apprehension, we must conclude, upon deeper Thoughts, that there is  
no



no Man, no Creature, dies; no Ship is cast away upon the Sea; no Sicknes or Plague comes, but God is perfectly pleased with it, and it is impossible that any should judge so well as he, what is most convenient. He sees it is most fit, and best for the whole World considered together, and most tending to the Support of his Authority and Government, that those Things should happen, which we feel most grievous. And therefore he being so well satisfied in it, doth it not become us to be so also? It is a Token, I am sure, of our great Respect to him, (if I may lawfully use so mean a Word) to express our Joy that he is satisfied, though we be very much grieved. It is impossible that we should lose any thing by this high Regard to him; and forgetting, as it were, our little Concerns, so he, the Great Lord of all, be but well pleased. He will requite us well for it, and let us know that he takes it in good part, that we are so submissive; nay, so full of Love to him, as to desire he should please himself.

Let us not therefore lament with too much Passion, that, with which, if it could be altered, God himself could not be so well pleased. Something he allows to our Weakness; but we must not take too great a License, lest we impute any Weakness to him also, *viz.* either Imprudence, or Envy, or Want of Power to do that which his Understanding and Good-will directs him to do.

VIII. But we are sure he is capable of none of these Infirmities, nor any other. For as he is the most Perfect Being, so he is Eternal, and his Nature is Unchangeable. He is always the very same Perfect Goodness, Wisdom and Power, which alters not. From whence we may raise these Three Meditations, which all bid us be well contented.

*First*, That he having steered the Course of the Affairs of this World from the Beginning, after this manner in which they now are, it is Impudence in us to desire a Change now, and a great Folly to expect it. Especially if we consider,

*Secondly*, That in all this Time he hath not seen any Reason to make a Change, or to mend any thing that he hath made. And

*Thirdly*, If he did see Cause, and will not; it is Madness for us to struggle with him, whose Will cannot be bent otherways than it pleases himself. Let but these Things be diligently weighed, and you will soon see how reasonable it is to be satisfied in all Events.

God hath governed the World thus long, in the Way wherein now it is; and do we expect a Change at this Day, merely because we desire it? Is this a better Reason for an Alteration, than all that he hath had for the Continuance of Things in their Ancient Order? Nay, have the Wise Men of all Ages left their Testimony to the Wisdom and Goodness of God's Govern<sup>r</sup>

Government; and shall we now, in these Times, go about to dispute it, or call it in Question? If he had not foreseen all things that might happen, yet after the Observation and Experience of so many Hundreds, or Thousands of Years, he could not but discern the Defects, if there were any, in his Workmanship: And after so many Complaints and Murmurings, if they were reasonable, surely he hath Goodness enough to amend them. But if he be resolved that Things shall go as they are, as by their long persisting in this Course, it appears he is; be sure we cannot, with all our Tossings and Vexations, amend any of them, but only make our selves worse.

Folly and Wickedness are their own Tormentors. They carry their Rods at their own Backs; and make all those miserable, who are led by them, even then when they are projecting to make themselves most happy. It will not be in the Way wherein they are. The Order in which God hath set Things is unalterable, like himself. And this is as unchangeable a Law as any else, That there is no Peace, no Quiet, but in Conformity to his Will and Pleasure.

And truly there is this further Reason for our Conformity with it, when we consider, which I shall but briefly mention,

IX. The Largeness of God's Sovereignty, and the vast Extent of his Dominion, As his  
King-



*Kingdom* (to speak in the *Psalmist's* Words) is an *Enerlasting Kingdom*, and his *Dominion endures through all Generations*; so it is an *Universal Kingdom*, and reaches unto all things. And is he so wise and able as to govern the whole *World*, *Heaven* and *Earth*; and may he not be trusted to dispose of thee, and thy small *Affairs*? Let that be sadly ponder'd; and no *Man* can have the *Heart* to oppose one *Thought* against the *Administration* of such an *Universal Monarch*, who sustains the *Weight* of such a great *Empire*, and hath so long, as I said, governed it with the greatest *Satisfaction* to himself, and without seeing any *Cause* to change his *Orders*.

And there is a particular *Reason* why we should confide in him, rather than any other *Part* of his *Creation*, that we are acquainted withal; which is the last *Thing* I shall mention upon this *General Head*, because

X. *God* hath expressed this *Wisdom*, *Goodness*, and *Power* of his, in a singular manner, for the *Good* of *Mankind*; and declared, that he hath an *unmoveable Will* to do us good, and to make us happy. If a special *Concern* for us will not satisfy us, in the midst of all the *Alterations* of *Life*, what will? Would we have him, the most *High*, to bend to our petty and low *Desires* in every *Thing*? Is it not sufficient, that he assures us he hath a *Regard* to our *Contentment*, above all the *Creatures* that

that we know: May we not well admire and applaud his Grace, which would condescend to give us such particular Satisfaction? What Need did he stand in of us, that he should take such Care that we might not murmur, but *Speak good of his Name?* Or might he not have done less for us, if he had not been much concerned in our Happiness? You know very well what I mean, and I need instance in nothing else, but only this (which contains all in it) the Gift of his only Begotten Son, whom he hath sent into the World to dwell among us, yea, to die for us. Do you imagine that God hates Mankind, or that he loves to see them troubled and afflicted, when he thought not his Son, his only Begotten Son, too great a Boon to bestow upon them? Is it likely that they should want necessary Things; nay, any thing that is profitable and fit for them, who are so much in his Favour? The Apostle St. Paul thought he needed only propound such a Question to every Believer's Mind, and they themselves could resolve, without his Assistance, what to judge. *If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him give us all things?* As much as to say, What an Absurdity is it, to suppose that he will deny us any thing that is really useful; or let us suffer any thing, that is not good and wholesome for us? None can believe that he hath  
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given his Son for us, and be of the Mind, that he should be sparing in any other Gifts. It is not consistent with any Man's Judgment, to think that he should confer such high Benefits, and yet with-hold from us such as he freely gives to the poorest Creatures in the World. Resolve therefore, that it is most just and wise to be contented in the present Estate wherein we are. For God, who is so good as to contrive our Happiness in such a remarkable manner, when we did not desire him; cannot let us remain one Moment in a State that is not good for us, now that we depend on him, and refer our selves wholly to him.

And that might be a Consideration distinct from all the rest. That if we wholly give up our selves to him, and trust our selves with him; he thinks himself the more engaged to look after our Welfare, and cannot, in any Honour, let Things go so ill with us, that we should complain of him. All Men in the World that have any Goodness in them, are never more concerned for other Mens Comfort and Safety, than when they devolve all they have upon them, and leave their Estates and Children, suppose, wholly to their Care and prudent Management, professing to depend and rely merely on their kind Help and Assistance. And therefore God Almighty, from whom all those good Qualities come which are in any Creatures, will  
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be far from deserting those, who have cast themselves entirely upon his Providence and tender Love; and take no other Care but to please him, and to be pleased with him in all that he doth.

And truly there is the greater Cause, that we should refer all to his Care and Conduct; trusting him absolutely with the Government of all our Concerns: Because his Counsels are so much above ours, that those Things which we think most hurtful, he makes to be exceeding useful to us; as those which we admire, he many times makes unprofitable. It is an Observation as old almost as the World, (to give an Instance of the last) that our Mother *Eve* called her Eldest Son *Cain*, as if she had got a mighty Purchase, (for that's the Import of his Name;) and her youngest Son *Abel*, as if this was but *Vanity*, (so his Name signifies) and good for little, in Comparison of the other Possession. Whereas this became the most worthy and valuable Person, and the other vain and unprofitable. So God lifts up those (as some of the *Hebrews* gloss upon this Passage) whom we despise, and makes that despicable which we are apt to doat upon. For what could fall more cross (to give an Instance on the other Side) to Old *Jacob's* Wishes, than the Disaster which befel his Beloved Son *Joseph*? He mourned, you know, and lamented for him, as if he meant to overtake him as soon  
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as he could, and lie down in the Grave, where he thought he was. And yet this was the Way to his Preservation, and to the Safety of all his Family.

There are a vast Number of Examples, both in Christian and Heathen Writers, to the same Effect, which it would be too long to mention. But they all prove this, That the greatest Calamities are sometimes the Means of Mens greatest Felicity. Nay, it hath been seen, that when Men even despair of pleasing themselves, they presently find that they are there where they would be. Just like the Famous Painter *Apelles*, who when he had drawn an Horse, and could not to his Content draw the Foam of his Mouth, in an angry Mood threw the Brush at his Picture, and by that means accidentally made the Thing which he desired. This *Sextus Empiricus* \* applies to his Scepticks, who sought for an untroubled Mind, by endeavouring to understand all things; and found it, by finding that they could understand nothing. But we may better apply it to our Purpose, to whom start up even when we least think of it, sudden Occasions to make our selves happy. Nay, the very Confusion of our Thoughts, leads us to keep them in better Order. Their Restlessness bids them be quiet;

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\* L. i. cap. 12.



and the Uncertainty of all things advises us to put our Trust in God. Which we have the greater Reason to do, seeing it is so certain that he hath a particular Affection to us, and is exceeding desirous of our Welfare. This will be more apparent, if we take a brief View of what our Lord Christ hath done for our Satisfaction: Which is the last of those Six Things, from whence, I told you, we might draw Arguments of Contentment.

VI. And truly the Knowledge of him furnisheth our Minds with a Number of excellent Thoughts; which are of great Power to quiet and compose our Spirits; whatsoever Occasion there may be of Trouble and Vexation. I will mention some of them.

I. And first of all consider, how little he enjoyed, and yet how well he was contented. He was born of mean Parents; he was brought up in a poor Calling; he was neither rich, nor honourable: And yet he neither thought himself poor, nor was he at all ashamed. Look what it was, as I told you heretofore, that satisfied him; and the same will infuse the like Contentment into your Hearts, if you be his true Disciples.

The Book of *Job* was writ by *Moses*, as *Origen* thinks, to comfort the *Israelites* when they were in the Wilderness, and to inspire them with Patience during their long Travels,



vels, which would have, in Conclusion, a good Issue. Certain it is, that it is one of the most Ancient Books of Holy Scripture: And this is no improbable Conjecture, that some good Man (for it is not the Style of *Moses*) might compose it on this Occasion: That having such a Noble Example before them of virtuous Patience under the forest Sufferings, (though we find no Promise he had of Deliverance) they might not murmur nor repine at their tedious March in the Desert, where they were so well provided for by the Bounty of Heaven, and had Assurance at last to come to a *Land flowing with Milk and Honey*. How much more then ought the Example of our Lord Christ to compose and settle our Mind in perfect Peace, who may say to our selves, as he did in another Case to the *Jews* concerning *Solomon*, *Behold a greater than Job is here?* One that is a Pattern to the whole World, as he was to that Nation, not only of this, but of all other Virtues whatsoever. By whom it is apparent, that we may be entirely beloved of God, and highly favoured of him, and yet be poor, and despised, and obnoxious to many Affronts and Abuses. Such a Companion as this, in a mean or miserable Condition, is able to sweeten it, and take away the Tedioufness of it. It is no Disgrace to be in his Fashion. And we may justly think he will like us the better, if we be not ashamed of it; but  
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content our selves with his Love, and his Promises, which, as you shall hear, are infinitely beyond all that was heard of in the World before. For,

II. His Charity, you must remember, was exceeding great to all Men that resorted to him. He did a World of Good, with the greatest Forwardness, and many times unask'd, to those who were in any Need. So careful he was, that the Multitude which followed him into a Wilderness, should not so much as faint by fasting too long, that he wrought a Miracle, rather than that they should be unsupplied: And indeed all his Miracles were wrought for the Relief of others, and not to enrich himself. He regarded not his own Ease, so he might but do the People a Benefit. He was in Danger to faint himself for want of Food, (*Mark iii. 21.*) that he might let none of the Multitude which thronged him, go away unsatisfied. And will he now, think you, see us want necessary Things? Now that we are in no Wilderness, (as the People then were) and now that he is in Heaven, as you shall hear presently, in a more Glorious Condition? Now that his Followers have fewer Wants, and he a larger Power to supply them? We cannot possibly entertain such Thoughts, without the greatest Forgetfulness of him, who gloried in this Charity, and thereby won

this Character, that *he went about doing good*, Act. x. 38. Nor was he less willing to suffer, than to do the Will of God. For,

III. You may consider, how much he endured, and yet *he was dumb*; as a Lamb before the Shearers, so he opened not his Mouth. Why should we complain then, who have neither so much Innocence, nor so great Sufferings, as he had? We are not so good, as to our Persons; nor so bad, as to our Condition; and therefore cannot with any Modesty murmur at what befalls us. We profess to follow him; but it is at a very great Distance: For he deserved better, and we deserve worse Usage, than we meet withal in the World. If we cannot tread in the Steps of his contented Patience and Submission to God, in so slow a Pace, and on such reasonable Terms; we may continue to commend, but we have little Love to his great Example. Shall we not endure a little, who have offended much; when he endured so much, who offended not at all? We forget, sure, the honourable Name by which we are called; and the Glorious Reward likewise, which he hath made due to our small Patience. For,

IV. Consider, I pray, in what Estate he now is. No less than Lord of all; the Sovereign



vereign of the World, who hath all Power in Heaven and in Earth, to do us good both here and eternally. And it is apparent, that it is such a Power, as can do us good by Sufferings and Troubles, as much as by any thing else. He hath such a Dominion over Angels, and Men, and all Creatures, that, as St. Paul saith, *all things are ours*, 1 Cor. iii. ult. He is able to make them all serve, in his Government of the World, for his Servants Welfare. And

V. How, I beseech you, did he come by this Power? Was it by aspiring and lifting up himself? No; but by being contented to humble himself as low as God pleased. For he took upon him, as the Apostle tells us, *the Form of a Servant, and made himself of no Reputation, &c. and therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a Name above every Name, that all might honour him.* To be lowly and submissive, that he chose himself; but the Honour he did not take to himself. No, he was called to it of God, as you read, *Heb. v. 4, 5. Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High-Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this Day I have begotten thee.* As he saith also in another Place, *Thou art a Priest for ever, after the Order of Melchisedeck.* By this, you see, the sure Way to be better, is to submit to what we are. Not to advance,  
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but to humble our selves to any thing that is pleasing to God, that he may exalt us in due time.

VI. And truly, if you consider what Christ hath promised to do for us, by this great Power of his which he hath obtained in this Way, you will be the more willing to resign your selves to him. The very next Words, after those I treated of at first, (*Heb. xiii. 5.*) tell you, that he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* The Lions may suffer Hunger; but he that fears the Lord, shall not want any good Thing. Why should we be troubled, who have a Lord so rich, and hath these Riches given him on purpose to bestow upon us, as he sees fit? Did the Children of *Israel* want, while they were in a barren Wilderness? Did not God rather cleave a Rock, and send Bread out of the Clouds, than suffer his Word to fail? And, if you observe it, those Words [*I will never leave thee, &c.*] were first spoken to them, to the whole Congregation of *Israel*, as afterward more particularly to *Joshua*, *Deut. xxxi. 6, 8.* where it is twice repeated. Which teaches us, that the Apostle would have Christians believe, (to whom he applies that Promise) that God still continues the same Resolution to provide for those who depend upon him; and that they can never be in such Straits, but he will find Means for their Support,

Support, and make them acknowledge that he is gracious. And now that I am speaking of his Promises, it comes into my Mind, and seems very remarkable, that

VII. Among the Beatitudes, or Blessings, which Christ pronounces to his Followers, the very first is to contented Persons. *Matt. v. 3.* where by *the poor in Spirit*, it is so plain he means those who set not their Hearts on Greatness or Riches, but are well satisfied in their present Condition; (though of the lower Sort) that there can be no good Reason alledged to make us doubt of it. For *St. Luke vi. 20.* repeating this Sermon, leaves out the Word *Spirit*, and saith only, *Blessed are, the poor*: In Opposition to the *Wo* he had pronounced a little before, to those who sought their Consolation in Riches and Abundance.

This is a sufficient Indication, that the Christian Poor, here commended, are such who seek not their Happiness in Riches: And therefore do not solicitously desire them, when they have them not, but are contented with their Portion; and when they have them, are not so in love with them, as not to be willing to lay them out cheerfully for the Good of others, and to leave them with an equal Mind, when God thinks good. This is true Poverty of Spirit, to be so affected in our Hearts, as not to be too earnest in  
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the Pursuit of Riches, when they are wanting; nor to cleave to them too passionately, as if they were our principal Goods, when we enjoy them: But whether they come, or whether they go away, to have an Equality of Mind, and to rest satisfied in the Providence of Almighty God. This is such a Temper of Spirit, that our Lord highly values it, as very suitable to his Kingdom; and as that which renders a Man's Mind most capable of his Religion, and disposed to entertain it into his Affection. And therefore he places it in the Forefront of all the rest, as a principal Virtue, to which a special Blessing belongs. And

VIII. If you consider Things well, you will find that the Blessedness is very great, which our Saviour is able to give to such Persons. There being no Sort of Goods, but he hath the Power to dispense them; which is as much as to say, he can make us compleatly blessed. There was never any Man yet, that could think of more than Three Sorts of Good; (1.) The Goods of the Mind; (2.) The Goods of the Body; and, (3.) The Goods of Fortune, as they were called anciently, or those without the Body.

For the former of these, it is easily confessed, that there never was any such Master of Wisdom, as he; who taught the Way of  
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God in Truth, and led Men into the Possession of that Knowledge, and those Virtues and Hopes, which are the greatest Ornament, and Beauty, and Satisfaction of the Spirit of Man. And as for the other Two; do we not clearly see, in the History of his Life, how that while he was present with his Disciples, none of them was in any Need, but they were instantly relieved; none were sick, but he presently restored them to Health; none in Pain, but he gave them Ease; none tormented by the Devil, but he freed them from his Power? If they were in Danger, as they sometimes happened to be upon the raging Sea, they no sooner cry'd, *Master, we perish*; but he as soon rebuked the furious Storm, and made Peace upon the foaming Waters, with one Breath of his Mouth. He was so bountiful and open-handed in these Blessings, that he would not suffer them so much as to mourn or weep, but filled them with perpetual Joy and Consolation. Nay, tells them plainly, that whilst he remained with them, it was absurd and incongruous for them to fast, as the Disciples of *John* and the *Pharisees* did; for they were the Children of the Bride-chamber, whose Time of lamenting was not till the Bridegroom was removed into the other World. And therefore though there be this great Difference between the Time of Christ's bodily Presence with his Disciples, and the Time of his Absence from

from them; that then they were in a State of Joy and Contentment without bodily Grievances and Molestations; and now we have Joy and inward Comfort, mixed with the Grief and Pain of bodily Troubles: Yet these Two Things our Saviour declared, for our greater Satisfaction, by what he did in those Days, when he was with his Disciples; first, his great Power; and, secondly, his great Good-will and Readiness to bestow even these Sorts of Goods, which belong to our Bodies and outward Estate. First, The Power, I say, which he hath to provide us with all Plenty, and Health, and Ease, if he saw it proper for us in this Time of his bodily Absence from us. He cannot have less Power, now that he is made *Lord of all*, than he had before; and therefore we ought to be satisfied, that there are no Goods belonging to our bodily and external Happiness (none of the Goods of Fortune, as we call them, Riches and Abundance of Wealth) but he is Owner of them, and can as easily give them, as speak a Word; if he judged them to be most for our Profit, and suited to that Condition of Probation and Trial wherein we are, to declare the Sincerity of our Love and Affection to him in all Estates of Life. We ought not to admit of any Doubt concerning this; nor at all to suspect his kind Inclinations, and his Good-Will: But, on the contrary, to believe,

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worldly, That it is his absolute Will and Pleasure to exercise this Power of his one Day, for the putting all his Disciples into the Possession of compleat Happiness in the whole Man: The proper time for which will be, when they shall enjoy his bodily Presence again in the other World. This is the least that we can gather from the Happiness which accompanied his bodily Presence here upon Earth. We should in Reason look upon it as a Picture of that Fulness of Joy and Satisfaction which we shall have intirely, even in our Bodies, when we shall be made Partakers of the same bodily Presence in the Heavens: Then there shall be no Mourning, no Sadness or Heaviness of Heart, no Cause so much as to fast (no more than there was at his first Appearing) but we shall keep a perpetual Feast of uninterrupted Mirth and Gladness, without any fear of exchanging it for sorrow again. For then as *St. Paul* saith, *we shall be ever with the Lord.* And he that was so good to those that followed him when he was present with them, as to bless their Bodies with all that they could reasonably desire, will not be sparing of the like and greater Favours, when he shall again present himself, and gather all his Friends together in a far more noble Place.

It is of no small Use then to consider in these Days; what our Saviour did when he was here upon Earth. How bountiful and free he was to his Disciples, without injuring of any other People. Nay, how he feasted the Multitude and spread a plenteous Table for them, without

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diminishing the Provision of the Country. How he gave them to eat, and there was never the less Victuals in the Places round about. How he provided sometimes not only for their Necessity, but for their Delight and Decency; as he did at the Marriage Feast. How he restored Sight to the Blind, and Legs to the Lame, and Life to the Dead; and asked nothing but their Love for his Pains. This shows that he is indeed the Lord and Disposer of all Blessings, or Parts of Happiness; those which concern the Body and outward Estate, as well as those that appertain to the Mind. And it shews that it cannot be want of Power which makes him not give all these now as he did then; no nor Want of Kindness, for there are the same Objects of Pity, and he had nothing else to move him, but only his own Goodness. And therefore we ought to be contented under all our Infirmities, or Incumbrances in this Life, as the Condition he thinks best at present, in hope that he will hereafter imploy his Power even for the Good of our Bodies: As he certainly will, in the Season which is most proper for it; that is, when he shall be present again with us in a bodily Manner, as he was then, but in a far more glorious and excellent Condition. It will be a great Shame for us if we be not contented. For consider,

IX. How many did forsake all and follow him, and that when he was but in his low Estate: and before they knew any Thing concerning his glorious Exaltation in the Heavens. Why should not we then be well contented, who



who are called to his Service not in his poor and mean, but in his rich and high Condition? Now that he is King of Glory, and now that we are not called yet, to forsake all Things for him neither?

X. And consider again in what Relation he stands unto his Church, which may breed in us a strong Confidence that he will make good his Promises, and fulfill his kind Intentions. He is the *Head and the Husband*, and all his Disciples are the Body and the Spouse. Now no Man ever hated his own Body, but nourisheth and cherisheth it; and So doth Christ the Church.

XI. Consider also how he hath made good his Promises hitherto in all Ages. We may say as the Psalmist, *Psal. ix. 10. Thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee*: Or as it is in another Place, *Psal. cxi. 4, 5. The Lord is gracious and full of Compassion, he hath given Meat to them that fear him: He will ever be mindful of his Covenant*. And so the Church sings, *Rev. xv. 3, Just and true are all thy Ways, O King of Saints*.

XII. Lastly consider, how he hath promised to bestow an everlasting Inheritance upon us in the World to come: And to make that Blessedness which then shall be conferred, a perpetual Good, without any Decay, or Alteration at all. Who is there, though Poor, that would be troubled and vexed, if he knew certainly that shortly he should be a King, and likewise reign for evermore in the greatest Splendour and Glory?



He would not lose these Hopes for the greatest Lordship in the Land; nor greedily catch at a lower Preferment, with the Loss of that undoubted Title to an immortal Kingdom. Now this is the Hope and Expectation of Christians. Their Calling is to *God's Kingdom and Glory*, 1 *Thess.* ii. 12. And our Saviour tells us it is the express Will of his Father, that he should give those that heartily believe on him *everlasting Life*, Joh. vi. 40. If this will not satisfy us, nothing will be of sufficient Power to bestow this great Good of Contentment on us. We must always remain miserable; and the more, because we have such Means in our Hands to be happy. In other Cases we feed our selves with Hopes, and we live upon them: What a pitious Folly is it not to do so, when our Hopes are so assured as I have told you, and are entertained with such valuable or rather inestimable Promises, which Christ hath made us? If these, together with such a Number of other Considerations as I have presented you withal, can do nothing to procure Rest and Quietness to our Desires, whether shall we send them to seek for it? What shall we do with those who are empty, after such a Fulness of Thoughts to satisfy them? Whether shall we smile or cry at the Folly and Madness of Men, who pine away and starve themselves in the midst of such Plenty and Abundance of good Cheer provided for their Refreshment? Is it not a ridiculous Thing, at first Sight, to behold the Unsatiable-ness and Disquiet of Men's Spirits about these  
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worldly Goods; their strange Ravings when they are any ways crossed, and disappointed in their Desires? And yet upon serious Consideration, it is rather sad and lamentable, and with constant Tears to be bewailed.

There were two Men, you have often heard, no doubt, in ancient Times, the one of which was always laughing, and the other always crying: So that they took them to be mad and distracted Persons. But concerning him that always laugh, (*Democritus*), one of the wisest Persons among the Heathen, *Hippocrates* by Name, who was sent for to cure him of his Frenzy, as it was generally esteemed, gives this Account; which it will not be amiss to hear and consider. How that he seeing the endless race, the Diligence and busy Labour of Mankind, about Things which were not worthy of such Pains and Toil, could not forbear to burst forth into a Laughter at their Folly. They go, faith he, over the Earth and Sea to get a little Money. They penetrate into their Mother's Bowels, and cut her Veins to furnish themselves with a small Treasure. And indeed they love that very Earth, which yet they tread upon. Nay, it increases my Laughter to see how they love that Earth which is hidden, and trample upon that which is seen and apparent. Being desirous to rule over many, they cannot rule themselves. Digging their Land they seek Money, and having found Money they would buy more Land. Having no Wealth, they long for it;

*Epist. ad Democritum.*



and when they have it, they hide it and seal it up, even from themselves. They are so mutable in their Desires, that now they would dwell on the Land; now on the Sea; and then on the Continent again. In War they commend Fortitude and Valour: But then they have none, but are overcome by Reason of their every Day's Luxury, Riot, Covetousness, and such like Vices. Why therefore should I not laugh said he; for no Man will laugh at his own Follies, but every Body laughs at another's. Neither did he laugh at those who ordered their Affairs wisely, and who were moderate in their Desires: But at those who extended their Appetites without any Bounds; always commending that which they have not, and loathing that which they have, throwing themselves by Lust, Covetousness, and such like Sins, into the Pit of Destruction, (these are his very Words, which the Apostle uses in like Case, 1 Tim. vi. 9.) In their Judgments they differ not from Children; in their Desires they have nothing different from Brutes: But only that the Brutes live, *et auctorem*, in Contentedness, and are well pleased with what they have. What *Lyon* is there that scrapes into the Earth for Gold? What *Wolf* is there that, when he hath gotten his Prey, doth not rest satisfied? Only Man neither Night nor Day hath any Satisfaction, but is ever troubling himself with his restless Thoughts and Desires. From whence he concluded, that *omnis homo ex veris* *visceribus*. Every Bit of Man from his very Birth



Birth is all Sick, or rather a mere Disease. And therefore they needed a Physician to cure them more than he; who only laboured to laugh them out of their Follies.

As for the other (*Heracitus*) who wept continually, he gives this Account of it himself in a Letter to *Lamphidamus*; That he mourned perpetually for the Wickedness of Mankind. They wonder, saith he, why *Heracitus* is always soure and sad: but they do not wonder that Men are always so wicked and sinful. Let but Men cease a little to do Evil, and I will cease to mourn. Let them but become better, and I will presently laugh and be the most merry Man among them. And in another Epistle of his to *Hermiodorus* he writes that the *Ephesians* had a Mind to banish him from their City; and therefore made a Law, that every one who did not laugh should be gone out of their Gates before the Setting of the Sun. I know very Well, saith he, that they all laugh besides my self; and therefore can have no other Design but to be rid of me. O Men; will you not understand what the Reason is that I am alway so sad, and never laugh? I do not hate Men, but only their Sins. Make your Law in this manner, if any Man hate Wickedness, let him depart the City, *et cetera*, and you shall see that I will be the first that shall go out. I will flee presently, not my Country, but its Vice and Wickedness. Or if you would make a Decree, that they who by their Wickedness make *Heracitus* that he can never laugh, should

be put to Death, it would be a great deal better for you, and procure you greater Reputation.

My Beloved, is the World amended since those Days? Are not Men still covetous and insatiable? Or do they not spend their Treasures upon their Lusts and filthy Desires? Are they not ever unquiet and discontented? Is not God and Vertue, in a manner, quite out of all their Thoughts? Yea, though they have the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, what are they the better for it? What considerable Reformation hath it made in the World? Who is there that stedfastly believes his Promises, and contents himself with a pious Life in hope of Immortality? How few that study real and impartial Godliness, endeavouring to conform themselves in all Things to our Lord? *Democritus* would laugh louder if he were alive, to see Men such Fools as to love the Earth more than Heaven. And the other weep more bitterly, to see the Love of our dearest Lord so vilified and contemned. Which of them shall we imitate? Truly, if we will be troubled about any Thing it should be this; that Men have no more Care of themselves; and that they no more value the Words of Eternal Life. *Rivers of Tears run down mine Eyes, (saith the Psalmist) because Men keep not thy Law, Psal. cxix. 136. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked, that forsake thy Law, ver. 53.* This is the most justifiable Grief, and it is best to join our selves to these Mourners; For the next Blessedness to that I mentioned is to such Persons. There is some  
Ease

Ease in this Kind of Trouble; a Joy in this Sorrow; a singular Refreshment in this Sadness. It is the expresse Word of our Lord, That they who mourn *are blessed: for they shall be comforted*, Matth. v. 4. But as to all other Things, we ought to be contented and well pleased; to rejoyce in *the Lord always*, and to be glad in his Salvation. Let us not suffer our Tears to flow too fast on Occasion of any worldly Crosses; but placing our hope in God, let us be merry and joyful. Let not our Affections be so much engaged to our Enjoyments here, as to leave us in too great Trouble and Disorder, when they will not conform to our Desires. For we have Multitudes of Reasons, from our selves, from other Men, from all Things, from God, and from our Lord to prohibit our Discontent. Let us but digest such Considerations, and they will be a Cordial to our Spirits, a Stay and Support at all Times to our Souls, which will never fail us. Instead of busying our selves so much about other Things, which either we cannot get, or not get Contentment by them, let us employ our selves in making our selves Masters of these holy Thoughts; and they will be instead of all other Possessions. And whereas we fear this or that which may befall us, let us but fear least we should offend our heavenly Father by Distrust of him, or murmuring against him, as not improving those great Talents of Wisdom which he hath lent us, and we shall soon find Cause to be in no great Dread of any Thing. I may say to all such as good old *Tobit* doth to his Son, when



when he sent him from him a long Journey; *Fear not, my Son, that we are made poor; for thou hast much wealth if thou fear God, and depart from all Sin, and do that which is pleasing in his sight. Tob. iv. ult.* Or as the Son of Syrach excellently speaks to all, *Eccles. xxvi. 4. Whether a man be rich or poor, if he have a good heart towards the Lord, he shall at all times rejoyce with a cheerful countenance.* And what better Heart, I beseech you, can we bear towards the Lord, than to repose our whole Trust in him, and commit our selves in well doing to his merciful Providence, and to rest satisfied in what he orders, and still speak good of his Name, howsoever our Condition alters. This is a Disposition of Mind which the very Heathens could not but highly applaud; and upon which they accounted themselves God's Witnesses to the World, and testified that he was good, and wise, and just in all his Doings. A most honourable Employment, of which a Man should be ambitious, as the greatest Dignity he can ascend unto.

They are the Words of *Arrianus, Lib. i.* in the Name of *Epictetus*. Thou, (*Cap. 29.*) art stript of thy Robes, and comest forth now in poor Apparel. What then? Canst thou not utter one brave Word in this Estate? In what Quality dost thou come up into the Theatre? *as a Witness cited or called by God.* Come thou, saith he, and bear Witness to me, if thou art worthy of such a great Place. Let me ask thee, Is there any Thing

Thing good or evil without a Man's self? Do I hurt any Body? Have I placed Happiness any where but in thy own self? What sayest thou? What Testimony wilt thou give to thy God? Wilt thou cry and complain, saying, *וְאֵלֹהִים, וְעַד, &c.* Lord, I am in a very lamentable Condition; I am exceeding unfortunate; no Man cares for me; no Man gives me any Thing; all dispraise me; all speak Evil of me. Is this thy Testimony? Wilt thou thus disgrace thy Calling to which he hath called thee? When he hath done thee such an Honour, and thought thee worthy to be produced as his Witness in so great a Cause; wilt thou basely reproach him? Then hear thy Doom. He that hath Authority pronounces thus; *וְאֵלֹהִים, וְעַד, &c.* I judge thee to be an ungodly and profane Wretch. Is this all? Yes; this is all. Thou art ungodly and prophane.

And would not any Man of sense be afraid of such a Sentence? Is not this a more sad and lamentable Condition, than that which he complains of? And yet this is the State of all Murmurers and Repiners at God's Providence. Instead of defending him, when he expects it, they accuse him. When they should justify him in the Face of the World, and it is in their Power to do him the greatest Right and Honour, they reproach his Administration, and are injurious to its Reputation. They turn to the other Side, when they are brought forth as his Witnesses on his behalf; and they represent him as faulty in his Government when they have the only

only Opportunity that can be given them, to clear him of all Harshness by being quiet, contented and patient in the midst of troubles, they make a vile Use of it, and impute to him the greatest Rigour or Neglect of them, by their perpetual Complaints. This he cannot but take exceeding ill at their Hands, and it will turn at last to an heavy Account, Which it will be safest for us to prevent, by being faithful to him, and giving true Evidence for him, when we are called to it, and when he expects it from us, and when he intends it as an Honour to us, that we, rather than others, should be produced as the Witnesses of our God. Let us, I mean, when any Affliction befalls us, give God the Honour due unto his Name; and declare openly by the Meekness, and Patience, and chearful Contentedness of our Spirits, that we think him to be Wise and Good, as well as Powerful and Just; and that nothing shall alter this Opinion, and make us think otherwise. Let us profess that we believe God can chuse better for us, than our selves: and that as we trust other skillful Persons, in sundry Cases, rather than our own Judgment; so we will trust God with the Government of our whole Life, which is a Business too big for us to undertake. By which means God will approve us for holy and vertuous Men, that bear a great Love to him. He will pass, not only a favourable, but, a kind and honourable Sentence upon us; and we shall certainly receive great Commendation at that Day when every



every Man's Praise shall be of God. He who is the true and faithful Witness, Christ Jesus, to whom all Judgment is committed, will not forget our hearty Affection; but reward us as his faithful Followers, in that Race of Patience, which is set before us. Amen.



A P R A Y E R.

I Adore and Praise, O Lord, thy Greatness, thy Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which shine in all thy Works of Creation and Providence. They all show forth the Majesty of thy Glory; and are placed and move in such comely Order, that thou thy self rejoicest in all thy Works, and art perfectly pleased even in that which gives us Grief and Trouble. It is our Duty, O blessed God, to be pleased too, and to rejoice in this Knowledge which thou hast given us of thee, who art from everlasting to everlasting, and changest not: But art ever the same immutable Love, exercising the most wise and tender Providence in every Part of this great World; and more especially over Mankind, to whom thou hast shewn the highest Kindness, and given unquestionable Testimonies of thy singular Care of them, and Good-will towards them.

There is nothing I am sensible so unseemly as a discontented Mind, repining at the present, or distrusting thee for the future; especially in us, who have been so strangely favoured by thee, and had particular Assurance of thy most gracious Inclinations and Purposes to make us happy for ever.

ever. I am ashamed, O my good God and loving Father, that so much as one complaining Thought should arise in my Heart; beseeching thee to pardon me, and to represent thy self so fully and feelingly to me, that I may with a serene and untroubled Mind receive whatsoever shall befall me: Yea, rejoice that thy most holy Will is done, though never so cross and contrary unto mine. O, sweet Jesus, who didst possess little and enjoy much; who didst endure much, and not complain at all; whose Charity was far larger than all the Wants of miserable Creatures; who providedst even for their Pleasure and decent Entertainment; and by humbling thy self hast obtained a most glorious Power, and promised to bless us, and never leave us nor forsake us; bless me, I most humbly beseech thee, with the same contented Mind and Spirit. Imprint on my Heart the Image of thy humble, meek, and patient Goodness. Make me feel that thy merciful Kindness endures for ever; and fill my Soul with that Meat which abideth to everlasting Life, as once thou didst the Bodies of thy Disciples, with the Meat that perisheth. While I think of what thou was, and what thou art, and what thou hast done, and what thou art able, and hast promised still to do for us, transform me by that means into the very Spirit which was in thee. That I may be lowly in Heart; and satisfied with my present Portion; and do Good and endure Evil; and conform to thy Will in every Thing; in Imitation of thy most excellent Example, and in Hope of that compleat Bliss, which thou art able and intendest I see to bestow



bestow upon me, both in Soul and Body in an immortal Life.

O God, what Things are those which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee; for these that trust in thee, and depend intirely on thy Goodness, and submit to thy Will and Pleasure! In what a kind Relation art thou pleased to stand unto us; that we may be confident thou dearly lovest us, and wilt take care of us? All Ages have experienced this Love, that thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee: Therefore thy Face evermore will I seek. I will never doubt of thy merciful Kindness; but alwayes believe that thou art gracious and full of Compassion: Just and True in all thy Ways, O thou King of Saints. Confirm and strengthen these holy Purposes in me, by the Assistance of thy good Spirit, making these Thoughts more strong, more lively, and mightily affecting my Heart. So that I may be able to say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me. He hath not spared his only Son, but delivered him up for us all: How shall he not with him give us all Things? I will bless the Lord at all Times, his Praise shall be continually in my Mouth, my Soul shall make her Boast in the Lord, and I will rejoyce in his Salvation.

O blessed Day, when we shall see Jesus again; and feel him changing this vile Body, and making it like his glorious Body, by the Power whereby he can subdue all Things to himself! O happy Day, when all Tears shall be wiped away from our Eyes; and there shall be no Sighing or Sorrow,



Sorrow, but present Satisfaction and Joy for evermore! Help me always to comfort my self in every Condition with the Hopes of that joyful Time, and to prepare my self for the Blessedness of it; by doing Thee all the Honour I can in this World: especially by testifying through a meek, patient, and chearful Suffering of all the Troubles of this Life; that thou art wise and good, and bountiful to all thy faithful Servants, and that thy Service in the midst of my Sufferings is better than all the Pleasures of Sin, which endure but for a Season.

O God, I desire always to give thee this Glory: and to count it an Honour that I can bear witness to thee, by a contented Vertue, in every State and Condition of Life. I esteem that Approbation and Praise which I hope for from thee, far above all the Dignities and Preferments of this World. Do thou, O Lord, but allow of me for thy good and faithful Servant; and make me but to feel the Comfort of that joyful Voice, which I hope to hear, Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter into thy Master's Joy; and do with me what thou plearest. I confide in Thee for that Happiness, and for all Things else. I leave my self wholly to thy Disposal. I depend absolutely on thy Wisdom, and thy good Will and Kindness, which I Intrust with All that concerns me. I resolve to be satisfied with what thou orderest, and still to speak good of thee: Hoping that whilst I have this good Heart towards thee, I shall at all Times rejoyce with a chearful Countenance. Amen, Amen.

S E R M.



## P A R T III.



## S E R M O N XI.



H E B. XIII. 5.

--- *Be content with such Things as  
ye have :---*



Am now come to the last of those three Things, which I propounded to be treated of, in the Beginning of these Discourses, which is,

The Means whereby we may obtain so great a Blessing as this of Contentment and Satisfaction of Spirit. The very Truth is; all those Reasons that I have given why we ought to rest contented in our present State, are as so many Helps to this Happiness, if they be considered. And if they be not considered, then nothing that can be said will prove helpful to us, because our Consideration will still be needed.

U

But

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But yet, because the often repeating of a Thing doth much impress it upon our Spirits; and that which doth not move us at one time, strikes us vehemently at another; and that which being delivered in one Form of Speech, is not much understood or regarded, becomes very plain and perspicuous when it is delivered in another; I shall therefore give you some Rules to observe, which, though they may border upon what hath been said already, will much conduce to set you forward in the Way to Contentment.

## I.

And it is very easy to see from the fore-going Discourses, that we ought in the first Place, to inform our Minds very well about the *Nature of those Things which are apt to give us Discontent*. Contentment is the Good of the Mind, and therefore, as *Seneca* hath well expressed it, we must go into our selves for it, because *the Good of the Mind is to be found no where but in the Mind*. And if we listen to the Instructions of our own Minds, they will direct us presently to a Remedy for our vexatious Thoughts, by bidding us consider, what it is that we are vexed about. Let it be any worldly Good which we want, or any such Evil which we endure, I have plainly shown you that the former are not of such Moment, but we may be happy without them; nor the other so afflictive, but we may be happy under them. Let us not  
magnify

magnify either of them, in our Fancy, above their just Proportion, and we shall soon satisfy our selves in Things that are truly great beyond all Estimation; either with or without these that give us so much Disquiet. I list not to spend the time in repeating all that hath been said to this Effect: But shall only recommend to you this Meditation of the royal Philosopher *Antoninus*. If thou canst find, faith he, any Thing in humane Life that is more worth than Justice, Truth, Sobriety, Fortitude, and, in a Word, the Satisfaction of doing that which right Reason prompts thee unto; turn thy whole Soul towards that Good, and enjoy that most excellent Thing, when thou hast found it. But if nothing appear better in this World, than that divine Being which is in thee, following its own best Inclinations, and having the Government of its own Motions, and subjecting it self to Almighty God; if all Things else confess themselves mean, and poor, and vile, in comparison of this; give not place to them, nor quit thy Self to pursue any of them, otherways than as thy own Reason directs thee, *viz.* as smaller Goods that ought not to be purchased with our own Disquiet, nor enjoyed without the Enjoyment of our better Selves. To this purpose that great Man speaks; and if I have helpt out his Sense a little, I have done it no wrong.

*Lib. 3.  
cap. 6.*

And that now leads me to the second Thing. After we have rectified Things in our *Minds*,



we must next proceed to regulate our *Desires* after this manner.

## II.

*Let us make as few Things as we can possibly, to be necessary to our Contentment.* Which is as much as to say, Let every man *Moderate his Desires.* This is grounded upon as great, Reason, as the Soul of Man affords. For it is manifest unto all, that they are our own Desires that trouble us, and not the Things themselves which are without us. And it is as manifest, that if we enlarge our Hearts to desire too many Things, then we shall be obnoxious to a great many Troubles, because we may not have all those Desires satisfied. The more we would have, the more we shall be liable now and then to want; and so be the more displeased: unless our Desires be very indifferent, or very cool and temperate. For there are two Parts of this Advice; as there is a double Moderation, one respecting the Measure of Things which we desire, the other respecting the Measure of the Desire it self. *Then we are happy when we do not desire much; or not with much desire.* If we cannot observe both Parts of the Rule, let us observe one; and we shall be less troubled, than otherwise we are like to be. If some Thing, for Instance, prove so agreeable to our Inclinations, that we are strongly drawn with most passionate Desires after it; yet let us provide that there be not many such Things.

Things. Let us content and satisfy our selves there. And seek a Remedy for the Disappointment we may meet withall in the Enjoyment of that passionate Desire, by Submission to the Will of God, and the Expectation of better Things, and such like Means, as I shall mention. For it is most certain that there is not a nearer way to Contentment than this, if we can hitt it, to make our Desires as few as we can; or not too eager and violent, but easily satisfied with Disappointments, Which is no such difficult Advice neither, because really there are but a few Things that we want, as I have formerly demonstrated.

This was the Wisdom of the ancient *Pagans*, who by bringing themselves to need but a few Things, *Effecerunt* (as *Tully* saith of *Dio-genes*) *ne quid sibi eripi possit*; ordered the Matter so, that nothing could be taken away from them. When any Thing was gone that before was with them, they could say with Chearfulness; we have not lost it, for it was superfluous, and there was no Need of it. It was a great Gallantry of Spirit that was in *Marcus Curius* among the *Romans*; who when he was found fault withal for giving the greatest Part of the Lands he conquered to the publique Use, and but little to particular Men, replied, I pray God there may never be any *Roman*, *Ὅς ὀλίγω ἡγήσεται γῶ τὴν τέλειαν*, who shall think that Land to be but little, which gives him Food and Raiment. He thought that so much was a great

*Plutarch in  
Apoth.*

deal, because it was enough. And so *Phacion* among the *Greeks*, when *Alexander* sent him an hundred Talents, returned them back again, Ἐπιδείξας πλεονέτερον τῷ δίδοντι τοσαῦτα, τὸν μὴ δέοντα; showing thereby that he was the richer Man who did not need so much, than he that gave it to him. There was no greater Truth he thought than this, Τὸ πλεῖον οὐ τὸ μὴ δεῖσθαι περισσῶς, that to be Rich, is not to need unnecessary Things. And thus *Xenocrates* in like manner, after he had taught himself, endeavoured to teach others this Art of Contentment. For when the same Prince sent him fifty Talents, he entertained the Messenger with a frugal Supper, which had sufficient, but nothing superfluous: And when he was askt the next Morning to whom he should pay the Money, answered, I thought you would have understood by last Night's Supper, that I do not need any more Money. They were much instructed by this Lesson; and it was the more effectual, because he did not speak it out of a dogged and melancholy Humour. For seeing the Messenger something dejected at his Words, he took Part of the Money, lest he should seem to condemn the King's Liberality. The like I might relate to you of *Socrates*, who seeing in a Fair, or a great Solemnity and publick Show Abundance of Gallantry and Bravery, cried out in a much greater, Πόσων ἐγὼ χρεία ἐκ ἔχω, How many Things are there, that I have no need of! But I will not burthen you with such Stories, nor deny that in much of this, there seems to be



be a greater Affectation of a mean Estate, than needs. There was no Cause that they should refuse those Riches which were fairly put into their Hands, (unless they thought there was an Intent to bribe them to consent to some unhandsome Action:) But their Meaning was good and generous. They would teach themselves not to be greedy of too much, nor too forward to catch at great Things: But inure their Minds to Moderation in Desires. And shall we think Scorn to learn of them? We may rather be ashamed if we do not that which they did; seeing we have a better Way of learning their Lesson. Our Lord hath been pleased to teach us this by a greater Example: And therefore let us contract and lessen our Desires; let us bring them into a small Compass, and confine them to necessary Things. And when they stretch their Wings further, (as who can hinder some Motions after Things that appear desirable?) clip them presently; or let them not fly too fast, nor carry us with too much Violence in the pursuit of them: But with equal and gentle Motions; least they transport us quite from the Satisfaction we may find in our present Enjoyments; and let us fall at last, when we cannot catch our prey, into a Pensiveness and Dejection of Spirit, as great as our Hope and Expectation of it. For the Prevention of which follow this third Advice.

## III.

*Make nothing necessary to your Contentment, but that which you can never want.* Which is as much as to say, Desire nothing principally and as your Happiness, but that which you can certainly compass. To have always that which we desire, is accounted Happiness. Now the Way to it is, to set our Hearts on that only or chiefly, which we may always have. And let me tell you, those Things which we may always have are not small Things and such as will not fill us; no, they are the most excellent as well as the most necessary; and such as are instead of all Things else beside. What are they will you say? I answer as briefly. 1<sup>st</sup>. Such as are naturally in our own Power, And 2<sup>dly</sup>. Such as by the divine Grace are in God's Promises.

The Heathens anciently distinguished between the  $\pi\alpha\epsilon\iota\phi' \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ , those Things that were in us to accomplish, and the  $\pi\alpha\epsilon\iota\chi\ \epsilon\phi' \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ , those that are not in us to order as we will. The former say they, we should concern our selves about; the other we are to let alone, and not give our selves any trouble for them, because they are not Things that will submit to our Will and Pleasure. It is in our Power, for Instance, to bear an Injury, to forgive it, to pray for those that do it, to requite it some time or other with a good Turn, to speak, at least, all the Good of them that they may otherways deserve,

deserve, and to govern the rest of the Motions of our own Breasts: but to suffer no Injury, and to hinder all Manner of Affronts is not in our Power, as I have else where discoursed. To rejoyce in all Conditions, to praise God, to be thankful for what we enjoy, that is in our Power: but not to be in such a Condition, that is wholly out of it. The Way to our Contentment then is mainly to desire such Things, and to apply our best Indeavours to attain them, as we may certainly make our selves Masters of; and to pass by the rest, or not concern our selves too passionately in them, as being Matters not fit for our Management, but in the Disposall of other Persons.

But we Christians have something to add to this Truth, which is, That there are certain Things which God hath told us he will not deny us, and others which he hath not obliged himself to bestow upon us. All Things are in the Power of God, though they be not in our Power: but all Things are not in the Will of God to grant unto us. His Power we know is infinite and extends to every Thing; but his Will we know only by his Promises, which are nothing else but a Declaration of his Will to us. Now he hath no where promised us continual Health, Abundance of Riches, Honour and Preferment, the constant Enjoyment of our Friends, and such like Things; and therefore we ought not, if we study our own Repose, to set our Hearts very much on these Things, but still with this Remembrance (which may dispose



dispose us to be without them or to part with them) that there is no Assurance of them. But he hath promised us himself, and Forgiveness of Sins, and his holy Spirit, and his Grace to sanctify every Condition to us, and his Power to help and support us, and his good Angels to be ministering Spirits to us, and eternal Life to be the Reward of contented Patience, and the greatest Reward to those who not only do, but quietly suffer his Will. And therefore these we should earnestly desire and most heartily seek; because we may certainly have them, and the having them will certainly give us Contentment and Satisfaction. For, *First*, by having them, we shall have so much of the other, which are not absolutely in our Power, nor in his Promises, as he Sees on all Occasions to be fit and needful for us. And, *Secondly*, By having them, we shall also be able to be without the other, when he doth not see them needful.

But some will say, perhaps, How shall we bring our Desires to this Moderation? Here we must have Recourse back again to to our Mind. And,

## IV.

*Study the Use of all those Things which we desire, before we engage our selves too much in the Pursuit of them.* This will, in great Part, answer that Question. We must ask our selves, on all Occasions, What are these Things good for,

for, and what shall we do with them? and then we shall soon see whether there be such Reason, as we imagine, to be so careful for them. *This was the Rule, which Philip King of Macedon gave to his Wife Olympias, δὲ πρῶτον τὸ τοῦ χεῖρος, ἢ τὸ τοῦ κτήντος τῶν ἀγαθῶν σκοπεῖν.* We ought first to mind the Use of all good Things, before we mind the Getting or Possession of them. And it is founded in a great deal of Reason: Because all Things are desirable for their Use, otherways we may as well be without them. Apply it then to all Manner of Things, that you long after, and cannot be satisfied (as you think) without their Enjoyment. Why do you desire so much Money, for Instance; to what Use do you intend to put it? Is it to buy you Food? A great deal less will serve that Purpose. Is it to buy you Clothes? They may be provided also with smaller Sums. Is it to lay up, and to purchase the Reputation of wealthy Persons? That is to no Use at all. Is it to fare deliciously and delicately every Day? There is no need at all of that neither: many have lived happily, without such Superfluities. What is it then that we would do with them? Why, do we desire such Abundance of Wealth? Is it to do much Good in the World? That is a worthy Desire indeed. But God will accept of our good Will, if we have not the Means to do it. Let us not torment our selves about this; for that's the Way to hinder us from doing what Good we can in our present Condition. We are

are bound to do much Good, when God bestows much Plenty upon us: but till then, he expects no more from us than we are able to do, and a pious Disposition to be bountiful when we are better able. That which can most reasonably be pretended, in this Business, to countenance our bold Desires, is the Regard we ought to have to Posterity; that they may be well provided for, when we are Dead and can take no further Care of them. But they may be happy enough hereafter, without our being miserable at present. It is Absurd to pester our selves with innumerable Cares, that they may live without Care when we are gone. And, perhaps, most Men can satisfy themselves in this Point, by reflecting how God hath graciously provided for them and succeeded their honest and religious Endeavours, though they had but very slender Provision made for them by their Parents. This is a Thing therefore that will justify our Diligence, but not our extream Solitude and Carefulness.

In like manner, when we desire to come to such Preferments, we should ask our selves again the Use of them, before we be so eager for their Possession. Is it not commonly that we may live, more splendidly, or have more Applause, or gain a greater Name among our Neighbours, or Some such unnecessary Thing? Why should we not then rather bid our Souls not be so desirous of them? Let us remonstrate to them the true State of Things; and they will presently confess that they are carried after  
that



that which either they do not need, or have no great Use of: and therefore those Desires may be discharged, as unprofitable. Which was the Thing I was to direct you unto, as one Way to Contentment. Another is this, To

## V.

*Live in the Exercise of the other Parts of Sobriety*, which I have lately treated of; and they will help us to this. They were these two, you know; *Temperance*, and *Humility*.

1. As for Temperance or moderate Use of all pleasant Things, it doth most effectually teach Contentment; because it shows how little will serve the Turn. It weans us also from the inordinate Love of sensual Things: which Love is the only Cause that makes the Want or the Loss of them, so troublesome. It makes Room likewise for sober Thoughts. And in short, it is a constant Exercise of Contentment in one Particular, which must needs dispose us the better to practise it in all other Instances. The more sparingly we taste of these fleshly Enjoyments, the better pleased we shall be in any other Estate, even when we cannot have them. It is no great Matter to be deprived of that, which we have often forbidden to our selves. We cannot feel the Mischief so sore, when we are denied those Things, which we were wont before to deny to our own Use. We want nothing, but what we could want whilst we had it. We are not merely necessitated to  
be

be without these Things: for we chose before not to enjoy so much of them as we might. So that in Truth we may say, as *Seneca* doth, *Hoc est praecupare tela fortuna*; this is to be ready prepared against the Blows of Fortune, as they called the Changes that are in the World. We are beforehand with any Alteration, and have prevented its Assault. Nothing can give us any Wound, that shall smart so much as otherwise it would, for we have tryed already what the Want of such Things can do upon us. *Occupavi te fortuna*, (said *Metrodorus*,) *atque cepi, omnesque aditus tuos interclusi*: I have got before thee, whatsoever Thing thou art which mayst come; I have taken thee, and have thee in my Hands; I have intercepted all thy Approaches, and thou canst not touch me. Nothing can come, but what is here already. I know the worst of all Things; for I have inured my self unto them.

They do very ill certainly, who desire to live a contented Life, that study how to make much of themselves, and how to fare deliciously every Day. They are the Enemies of their own Happiness, who love to swim in all Manner of Pleasures, and to gulp down as much as they can of these sensual Delights. They do but prepare for themselves the straiter Prisons, while they take so great a Liberty: And render themselves too tender and apt to shrink at the smallest Prick of a Pin, while they indulge themselves all Manner of Delicacies. They would not be so miserable hereafter if they did  
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not now allow themselves to be too jovial. They would endure more, if they would please themselves less. Afflictions would not rob them of Contentment, if they could content themselves with a moderate Use of their present Enjoyments. All our Vertue, the Ancients were wont to say, consists in *bearing* and in *forbearing*. The former would not be so hard, would we but make the latter more familiar.

II. As for Humility, the other Part of Sobriety which I have long treated of, it is a Vertue of such a Quality, that it contains in it the Reason of Abundance of those Reasons which I have given you for Contentment of Mind in all Estates. It is an Acknowledgment of the Supremacy and high Authority of Almighty God; in which, as I said, we should be satisfied. It bows our Will in Submission to his; which is the very Secret of Contentment. It makes us think we deserve nothing at all; and so disposes us to be well pleased with what we have. To the hungry Soul, saith *Solomon*, every bitter Thing is sweet: and to the humble the smallest Favour, is an high Obligation. It teaches us to renounce our own Understanding in many Things; and to think that best, which seems so unto God. It brings us to him, the true Good, by making us feel that we have nothing of our selves, but all from his infinite Bounty. It is an utter Enemy to Ambition, Envy, Vain-glory, Confidence in Riches, as I have formerly distinctly shown  
you :



you: And these being banished, we are thereby freed from so many Enemies to our Peace and Contentment. In brief, it teaches us not only to want, but also to suffer what God pleases; because we are his Creatures, but not so good as we ought to be; and every Thing it embraces as good, which will make us better.

On the contrary, Pride doth little less than distract the Mind: So far it is from all Contentment. For (1.) it makes Men think they know that, which they do not know. And this is a great Degree of Folly, though it be not so accounted; because most men labour with this Disease, and it is incident to us all, if we take not care to prevent it. It makes Men also (2.) hope and look for more, than ever they are like to enjoy: which is a Piece of Foolishness, as all are ready to confess. And (3.) it disposes them to believe that they can do more, than is in their Power; and that they have that, which they have not. Which puts them upon many vain Enterprizes, and is not so much Folly, as *perditæ dementiæ* (in Cardan's Language) a Piece of desperate Madness. He therefore that would have Contentment, must keep himself free from this Infection; and be as humble and lowly as he can in his own Eyes. He must remember that the greatest Part of Foolishness, yea, the Whole of it consists, in too great an Opinion of one's self. The Modest and the Timorous, though they do not use all Occasions as they ought, yet they live more securely than others. They are less busy, but they

they are thereby more at Rest. They may miss many Things; but they are safer and have greater Peace in what they have. I must add, that to the Practice of this must be joyned, the Exercise of all other Vertues; which, indeed, are all included in true Humility of Spirit. Then we must needs be provided of great Satisfaction, and well guarded against all Attempts to disturb and disquiet us, though we be liable to be invaded by the rude Violence of other Men, and sometimes, perhaps, be ill treated by them. For, *first*, it is to be considered, that none but those who are very bad will have the Confidence to do Mischief to those who are very good. They that are compleatly vertuous, may reasonably expect fair Quarter from those who are not extreemly wicked. Modest Sinners will be ashamed to do them hurt. According to that of St. Peter, 1. Pet. iii. 13. *Who is it that will harm you, if ye be Followers (or as some Copies have it, if ye be zealous) of that which is Good?* None, that is, who are not desperately bad. For, as our Saviour saith, *The meek shall inherit the Earth.* As long as there is any Shame left in Men, they have not the Heart to trouble those, who are of a quiet, meek, humble, modest, charitable and peaceable Disposition. As long as we have a care to please God exactly, there is something beside his omnipotent Power that restrains and with-holds Men from hurting us: even the Power of impartial Godliness, the confessed Splendor and Brightness of intire Ver-

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tue; which overcomes Men that are not strangely impudent, and howsoever will make all sober People cry Shame of them, that harm those who do Harm to no Body, but Good to all. Besides (2dly,) when we do suffer we shall be the less affected with it: and that, not only because we shall have divine Supports, but because it is honourable to suffer for well doing. When we know that we suffer not by our own Fault but by the Fault of others; it is not only a great Comfort to us but a great Glory. And (3dly,) we shall be the more contented, because all well minded People will not only pity us very much and pray for us, but also be moved with Compassion to succour, relieve, and be helpful to us, in a suffering Condition. Whereas if we suffer being riotous Spend-thrifts, idle, injurious, covetous, talkative, contentious, or unpeaceable, all Men are apt to upbraid us; and some will little less than rejoyce in our Calamity. And again, (4thly,) When we suffer thus vertuously and contentedly, it will be the most effectual Means to make even those that harm us relent, and honour that Goodness which before they despised. They will be the rather moved to this, when they hear one Neighbour commending our Humanity and Courtesy, another our Humility, a Third our Temperance, a Fourth our Diligence, a Fifth our Devotion to God and our Charity to the Poor, a Sixth our Readiness to do them any Kindness, or some such Vertue or other: which must needs render those the most wretched and wicked

wicked Sort of Men, who are but inclined to do wrong to those whom all but themselves commend and praise.

As for those Things which we suffer from the Hand of God, and which the Law and Condition of our Nature makes us subject unto; Humility teaches to bear them with the most equal and submissive Mind: to lay our Hand upon our Mouth, and not complain of the Author of our Being; who is not of such a Nature that he should make any Thing to be miserable. Let us discourse and give Prescriptions as long as we please, we shall never attain Satisfaction and Contentment, till we understand and believe this, which I shall add as the last Thing, that I shall mention at this time.

VI.

*Possess your Mind with right Notions of Almighty God: And perswade your selves, that he is, and that he administers all Things well and wisely. This, as Epictetus hath truly observed, is ΚΟΙΝΩΤΑΤΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΙ ΤΗΣ ΔΕΥΣ ΕΥΘΕΣΙΑΣ. The principal Part of our Religion and Piety towards God: In which he exactly conspires with the divine Writer to the Hebrews, when he saith, He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. This Persuasion being wrought in our Mind, saith the same Philosopher, it will make us both obey him chearfully, and submit to all that comes to*



pass willingly, as ordered and disposed by the most excellent Mind and Counsel: And so we shall never find fault with him, nor complain as if we were neglected by him. Whereas, if we imagine this to be ill done, and that to be a Mischief which befalls us; we shall fall into murmuring against the Cause of all those Things. For this is natural to all living Creatures, to fly from and avoid, with a great Aversion, both all those Things which they apprehend hurtful, and the Authors of them: as on the other Side, to love and admire that which they apprehend profitable, and those who are the Cause of it. Upon which Passage another excellent Philosopher hath made

*Simplicius  
in cap. 38.*

a notable Discourse, to this Sense: Observe, saith he, wherein the right Notion of God consists. *First*, That we judge him to be the first Cause of all Things: and then that he advises and consults for the Government of the World, and doth not let Things go at all adventure: and lastly that he disposes of all Things, well and wisely. He therefore that either believes there is no God, the Creator of the World; or if there be, thinks that he regards nothing, and doth not exercise any Providence over his Creatures; or if he grant both these, yet is not sensible that he governs all Things in the most excellent manner, agreeable to the highest Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; he will never honour him nor worship him as he ought: nor will he subscribe to what he appoints, nor submit

mit himself to it, as proceeding from the best Judgment. No, nor will it be possible for us to direct our Lives aright, so that we never reproach or accuse that which is ordered by the best Mind; unless we think likewise, that those Things only are the Good and the Evil in which we are concerned, which are within our own Power. For if we seek our Good and Happiness in external Things, and there also imagine that our Evil and Misery lyes; since we cannot but be often frustrated in our Desires to enjoy that Good, and to avoid that Evil; we shall naturally fall into a secret repining at the Author of those Things, who, when he could, would not give us the one, and keep from us the other. For all Things that have Sense in them naturally abhor that which they conceive hurtful, and embrace, as you heard, that which they conceive most delightful: and they are affected towards the Authors and Causes of them, according to the Hurt or Good, which they take to be in the Things themselves. Is it not necessary then that we rectify our Thoughts and Apprehensions of Things? otherwise it cannot be avoided, but that he who thinks himself mischieved and undone by any Thing, and believes God to have a Hand in all Events, should be apt to complain and have an evil Heart towards him. He will never delight in him, that is the Cause of his Misery. For every one is affected towards him that doth the Damage, like as he is towards the Damage it self. Children themselves, we see, are an-

gry at their Parents, when they with-hold that which they apprehend necessary for them, or when they inflict that which they think unnecessary. Who doth not see then, I say again, an absolute Necessity of establishing firmly in his Mind the Notions forementioned? That is, after he is rooted in this Belief that God is the first Cause of all Things, to perswade himself that he still governs all Things; which those are most apt to doubt of, who have ill Success, even in good Enterprises. Notwithstanding that we see the Evil unpunished according to their Merits, and the Good unrewarded, and in want of these Things, which we think they should be encouraged withall; Let this Principle remain unshaken in our Minds, that Things do not fall out by Chance, but are disposed by Almighty Providence and a better Wisdom than our own. Especially the Affairs of Mankind, who are the only pious and religious Creatures in this lower World; and therefore are no small and contemptible Portion of God's Goods and Possessions (as one may call them,) which are valued by him, according to their Worth and Dignity. Do we not see how the Mind of Man takes care of its own Works? nay, how it governs whole Nations and manages the Affairs of Kingdoms? why should we think then that the divine Mind is unconcerned in its Works, even in the principal of them, or that it is wearied in its Inspection over them? Let not any of the cross Things that we meet withal, particularly the Troubles and Afflictions of the  
good



good and the prosperous, flourishing Condition of the Bad, be of any Force to supplant our Belief of this Matter. And that we may always preserve it and hold it fast, let us always remember that it is impossible the divine Mind should not do Justice, and manage Things with the greatest Prudence, and have the greatest Love to those that are his Worshipers and cordially obey his Laws. We ought to think that those Things are not so good, as we imagine, which pious Men want, nor those Things so Evil, as we fancy, which they suffer; rather than think that God is not good when he denies them the one, and when he lets them endure the other. And by the same Reason we should not be offended at the Prosperity of the Wicked; nor think God to be of so weak a Nature as to be bribed by a Multitude of Gifts and Sacrifices (which their Riches can furnish his Temples withal) to be more liberal to them in his Benefits, than to the poor pious Persons. There is nothing more absurd than this. We may be sure there are other Reasons in his most excellent Mind for this Sort of Dispensation. Which if we cannot comprehend, yet this we ought to be sure of, that he is so just and good, as to do good alwayes to those that are good, and to make them better even by their Calamities.

This Discourse shows how needful it is to imprint the first Rule in our Minds, and to joyn it together with this. For if we had not so high an Opinion of those Things which we

desire as our Good, nor so bad an Opinion of those Things which we would by all means avoid as our Evil; if we thought the one could not do us any such great Good, nor the other such great Harm; and that to be the true Good and Evil, which we do our selves; we should not be tempted to have, in the least, worse Thoughts of God for want of that Good which we long for, or because of that Evil which we suffer. The better we practise the first Rule, the better we shall follow this: and this will ease us of all our Troubles. If we think that God is good, notwithstanding what we want or what we endure; nay, that he can do us Good by either; and that he doth not, nor we ought to esteem that so Good which may do us Hurt, and that so Evil which may do us Good; we should be easily satisfied and acquiesce in that which he is pleased to appoint or permit. The Course of the World cannot run amiss under his Guidance. Which way soever the Current or Storm drives us, we shall still meet with our Haven. If our main Interest be secured, nay, promoted by what happens; there will be no Cause of making complaints, much less of bitter Lamentations. And truly it argues a great Defect in the Minds of Men, and that their Judgment is blind, as *Philo* the Jew still better explains this Matter, in that they admire these outward petty Things so much, and regard not how Matters are within.

Men

Men do not think that God hath as much Wisdom and Care as a common Physician: Who going to administer to a Man's Body, though he be a Prince that sends for him, doth not regard the brave Front of the House; nor stands to look upon the noble Porch and Walks, or the fine Pictures in his Gallery, as he goes along; or the numerous Attendants, and the Servants that wait to receive him: but goes straight to the Bed-side of his Patient; and not regarding what the Curtains or Coverings are made of, or any Thing else, applies himself presently to his Business. And sometimes hastily throwing all aside, when there is great Danger, he lays his Hand directly upon his Pulse to feel how it beats; and sometimes goes further and feels his Breast, or his Belly, and his Legs, that he may know exactly in what Condition he is. Nay, he throws off all the Clothes, perhaps, as if he was in a Passion, that he may make a speedy Application to his Feet or some other Part, where he thinks it will be most effectual. Which may make ignorant People think that he is rude and uncivil; a Man that understands not the Reverence he ought to have to that great Person and those that are about him. But he knowing very well what the Necessity is, goes on with his Work, and not regarding their Censures, administers what he thinks most fit. Perhaps he lances, or cuts, or burns the Flesh, if the Case require it. Is it not easy to accomodate this to our present Purpose? There is no wise Man  
who



who professes *the cure of the Soul*, the Cure of that great Princess the Soul of Man, but he contemns all those Things, which the foolish Opinion of the World, after the manner of blind Folk, is wont to be amazed at. He searches into the Soul; He touches the very Heart to feel if it beats with unequal and hasty Motions of Anger. He touches the Tongue to see if it be rough and prone to Evil-speaking, or if it be lascivious or too talkative; He feels the Belly, if it be unsatiable in its Appetite; And so all the rest of the Passions and Perturbations and Diseases of the Mind, he examines them strictly least the Man should perish. Whereas, on the contrary, people that are astonished at the outward Splendour of Things ever live in Error. They never come to the Mind, which is the reigning Part in Man; but they stay without Doors. They stare upon the Porch, and all the Things without the Gate of Vertue; such as Riches, Glory, Power, Health, and all the rest of that Kind. These they admire; and these they imagine not only all Men, but God himself also should take the principal Notice of, and provide for their Preservation and Increase. But it must not be so. The Method of God I have described before in the Practice of wise Men. He hath the greatest Regard to the Soul, as the Physician I told you, hath to his Patient's Body. As he is little concerned for all the outward Ornaments of it, but looks after the Man himself: so we should believe the most high God doth;

doth; who knows the Mind is most a Man's self. The Body is but an external Thing; and as much beneath the Soul, as the fine House and garden, and all the rest I mentioned are below the bodily Health. If the Soul be but safe all is well. To this he directly makes his Applications, passing by the other as less considerable, when this is in great hazard. Nay, perhaps he throws all Things else aside, like as the Physician doth the Bed Cloaths, as if he was displeased. He strips us naked, and lays Affliction upon our Loyns and puts us to great Pain, and all to do a Cure upon the more excellent Part. If we be rid of all its inward Diseases, it is no Matter how the Cure be wrought; though it be, as I have shown heretofore, at the Expence of our Bodies and worldly Estates.

If it were not for fear of being too tedious, I would have added the Wounds of a Christian Writer: But I shall only give you the Summ of them, which is this. We suspect Almighty Providence, because we behold as we think many Irregularities. Whereas that very Irregularity, *Εξ ἀκανόνων ὁ Θεὸς ὁρᾷ*, hath Greg. Naz. Orat. 16. something equal and regular in it, in the Sight of God. Just as you see the several Materials of a Piece of Work, which asunder seem to have no Beauty, no Order at all in them, when they are all put together by the Artificer, appear a very elegant Structure. We must not therefore conclude that God is *ἀνόητος*, without Art or Skill in his Government,

ment, because we are rude and unskilful ourselves, nor think that he manages Things without Order, because we understand not the Reasons. The Truth of it is, we are like to those who have a Swimming in their Head, or are sick at Sea, who think all Things turn round, when they are giddy themselves. Let us remember that he is God and we are Men. Let us acknowledge that as he is the Builder of the World: So he is the Supervisor of his own Work. And especially let us acknowledge that he takes care of us; and though contrary Things govern our Life, let us not question his Providence; for perhaps they are unaccountable to us, that we may admire that Supreme Reason the more. *Ἡ ἐνδοξία τοῦ θεοῦ παρὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶν ἀκατάληπτος, &c.* For that which is easily apprehended, is generally despised. But that which is above us, the harder it is to compass, the more admirable it appears. And therefore let us not admire all Health, nor nauseate every Disease. Let us not set our Hearts on Riches, and, as it were, give them a Part of our Souls; nor think Poverty detestable, and turn our Minds with utter Aversion from it. But let us without any disputing or solicitous Care to resolve all Questions that may be askt, Believe this (as *Arnobius*, another of the Ancients speaks) that *Nihil a deo principe quod sit nocens latque exitabile proficisci, &c.* Lib. 2. adv. Gentes. Nothing comes from the most high God which is hurtful and destructive. This we hold, this we know, in the  
Know-



Knowledge of this Truth we stand, that there is nothing done by him, but what is salutary to all; nothing but what is sweet, and most full of Love and Joy and Gladness; which hath infinite and incorruptible Pleasures attending on it.

And therefore why should we be discontented with that which comes from so good an Hand? It would be impossible we should be so, were we from the very first bred up to these Thoughts, and had not our Minds been poisoned with other pernicious Opinions. If Christians had alwayes been as careful as some Heathens were to preserve worthy Notions of God, the World would be more happy and at a better Pass than now it is. Good Thoughts of God could not chuse but breed in us good and chearful Dispositions of Mind whatsoever befalls us. And therefore *Plato* very discreetly takes special Order in the Government of his Common-wealth, that Children should be taught Nothing out of the common Fables, that passed up and down the Country in those Dayes, which represented God not to be good, or to be the Cause of Evil. For God, saith he, can do no Evil, nor hurt his Creatures; but some other Cause must be found out of all the Evils that are in the World. This ought therefore to be the Law, saith he, by which Poets and Fable-makers should regulate their Discourses, that God is *αἰτιον μὴ πάντων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν*,  
*The Cause and Principle only of good Things.*  
 This

*Lib. 2. de  
 Repub.*

This he thought would breed generous Thoughts and noble Dispositions in their Minds: And therefore would much more do so in us; who know God to be more than good. So *Tertul-*

*lian* excellently expresse it; *Bo-*  
*Lib. de Re-* *num Deum novimus, solum optimum à*  
*surrect. Carn-* *Christo ejus addiscimus.* We knew  
*cap. 9.*

God to be good; but that he is the best, or superlatively good; we learn only from his Christ. Who, as I told you the last time, hath assured us of an extraordinary good Will which God bears to us; and hath made such clear Demonstration of his abundant Goodness, that we have no Reason to distrust him; but all the Arguments in the World to confide in him, and acquiesce in what he orders for us. So we shall most certainly do, if these becoming and worthy Thoughts accompany us concerning our Creator. They will produce in us an ingenuous Love to him, an hearty Trust in him and Resignation to his Providence, as you shall hear another time; and an handsome Courage and Resolution under any Hardship that it is his good Will we should endure. For why should we fear? why should we decline any Thing so passionately which the good God would have to be our Portion? There is no Cause we should start at it; much less fret and vex, and, toss our selves up and down in perpetual Unquietness. We ought rather to bear it decently and with a submissive Generosity: remembering, as I said, that he is not tied to one Way of doing

us Good; and that all Ways are alike to his Power; and that he hath no Inclination to do us any Thing but Good, by all that befalls us; and that he hath promised, as you will see in what follows, to provide for our Welfare, both here below and in the upper eternal World. We may trust him; and we are very unwise if we do not: for nothing will more disoblige him than mean and unworthy Thoughts of him, and unkind Jealousies and Suspicions of his Inclinations, which make us diffident and distrustful of his Providence, and with a pensive Sadness to groan under his Government: Which we ought by our chearful and patient Obedience to commend and praise. Amen.



## A P R A Y E R.

O Most holy and ever blessed God, when we turn our Eyes from this World towards thy self, we cannot but account it our highest Happiness that we know thee to be the Author of it, and that we know thou rulest and governest in Heaven and Earth, and humblest thy self to take a speciall Notice of us, the Children of Men; whose Affairs thou administrest with such great Reason, Wisdom, and justice, and hast declared thy self so abundant in Goodness and tender Mercy, that we ought not to suspect thee of any Unkindness to us, or entertain any hard Thoughts of



of thee, notwithstanding any Misery that may befall us: But in every Estate and Condition of Life to adore thy Power and commend our selves to thy Wisdom, and hope in thy Goodness, and rest satisfied of thy Intentions of giving us better Goods, than we are naturally apt to desire.

Accordingly, O Lord, I here bow down my very Soul before thee, and with the greatest Humility of Spirit submit my self, both to what thou wouldst have me to do, and what thou wouldst have me to endure. I know that I cannot but be safe in thy Hands, and that no Harm can come unto me, while my Heart is possessed with a due Care to please thee, rather than to ease my self. Settle in me, O blessed God, right Notions and Apprehensions of thee. Perswade me perfectly, as of thy Being, so of thy Providence, and excellent Counsel, and fatherly Care, and Almighty Love; that can turn the greatest Evils of this World, into our greatest Good. Fill my Mind with such a strong and lively Belief of thy most blessed and gracious Nature, that none of the Crosses of this Life may ever shake my Hope in thee, or make me murmur and repine at any Thing, which thou thinkest fit should be my Portion. Indue me likewise with a right Sense of the Nature of all those Things whether good or evil which we desire to enjoy or to avoid; that the Want of the one, or the Suffering of the other may not seem so considerable, as to alter my Thoughts of thee, or weaken my Belief in thee, or disturb the holy Peace and Joy which the Thoughts of thy good Will towards me, are apt

apt to raise up in me. Help me by wise and composed Thoughts to moderate all my Desires after those Goods that are without me; to be contented with those that are within my self, which none can take away from me; to value all Things by their End and Use; to enjoy what I have temperately; and to live in an humble Sense that I have nothing, but what comes from thee, and is the Fruit of thy free Bounty; That so I may return it quietly, and acknowledge that in all Conditions I have more, than I deserve.

Adorn my Soul with all the Graces of thy holy Spirit, that so I may have Peace within, in the midst of all Troubles which surround me; and the Splendor of Christian Virtues may shine forth in the greatest Darkness. Enable me always to prize Innocence, more than Pleasure or Greatness, or any other worldly Good; to show forth the Power of Godliness and a divine Nature, under all the Pressures and Sufferings that I may lie under: That honouring my Religion, it may be an Ornament and a Crown of Glory to me, both now and in the great Day of the Lord Jesus.

I commend my self unto thee, O God, who canst not misguide me; and perfectly knowest what is fittest and most convenient for me in every Part of my Life. Bear me up against all Discouragement, by wise and pious Thoughts, especially by a firm and mighty Sense  
Y that

that thou art good and dost good, and hast  
 shown thy self most excellently good to us in  
 our Lord Christ Jesus, by whom I will give  
 Praise and Thanks unto thee for ever and ever.  
 Amen.



SERM.





# SERMON XII.



HEB. XIII. 5.

*—Be content with such Things as  
ye have : ———*



**W**HEN our Minds are once established upon this Bottom, that God is, and that he guides all Things, and is excellent in Counsel, and doth not manage his Affairs amiss, but so well, that all wise Men have ever satisfied themselves in his Government ; we shall find great Cause to welcome another Advice for our Content and Quiet in every Estate: Which is

## VII.

*To live in the constant Exercise of a divine Faith.* We have a Revelation to guide us and support us together with our Reason; which bids us rely upon the Word of Almighty God. And it is a famous Saying, you know, of the Prophet *Habakkuk*, often cited by the holy Writers of the New Testament, that in Time of Distress and Danger [*such as those were when he wrote,*] *The just shall live by his Faith*, Hab. xi. 4. That is, he shall be saved and delivered, or live in Chearfulness and good Comfort, by his Faith and Trust in God, and constant Adherence to his Religion. Now there are these Three Things, which we should constantly believe, among many others.

I. *First*, The Promise which our Saviour hath made us, That he will take Care of us here in this World; especially when we are in Trouble and Distress. I mentioned it the last Sermon but one, and it followes immediately after those Words, which I chose for the Ground of this Discourse, *Hebr. xiii. 5. He hath said, I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Let us depend on the Truth of this Saying. Let us build upon his Word, that we are under a most loving and indulgent Providence, which will be so tender of us, as not to withhold any Thing from us, nor suffer any Thing to befall us,

us, but what he thinks most fit, either to be denied us, or to try us. In this you know, *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and *David*, and all the Faithful in old Time (to whom God's great Love was not so manifested as it is to us) continually comforted themselves: and therefore let not us be so ungrateful to him and such Enemies to our selves as not to accept of this Consolation. *When they went from one Nation to another, from one Kingdom to another People* (i. e. had no certain Dwelling-place, no fixed Habitation; but, as it is said of *Abraham*, *Were called to Gods Foot*, Isa. xli. 2. that is, went whithersoever he would have them,) *God suffered no man to do them wrong, yea, he reprov'd Kings*, (such as *Abimelech* and *Pharaoh*. Gen. xii. and xx.) *for their sake, saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.* Psal. cv. 13, 14, 15. And is he not the same still? Or rather is he not more now to us, than he was to them? For he is in our Flesh; all the Fulness of the God-head dwells in our Lord bodily; and therefore he will not suffer us to take any Harm, he will not leave us in the most forelorn and forsaken Condition. May not a Man well content himself in this Treasure of the divine Providence, so rich in Mercy? Is there not Wealth enough in these Words of the Lord of all, *I will take care of you*? Either we have no Faith, or if we have, it cannot but constrain us to say, as it is in the next Verse, *The Lord*



*is my Helper, I will not fear what Man can do unto me.*

Read but the cxlvith Psalm from the 5th Verse to the End, and See how the good Man comforts himself in the Knowledge and Belief that they had of God, in those times. He begins thus, *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.* And then he proceeds to tell us from what Considerations this Happiness and Comfort sprung out of that Fountain of Life and Bliss. (1<sup>st</sup>.) From his great Power, ver. 6, *Which made the Heaven, the Earth, the Sea, and all that therein is.* (2<sup>dly</sup>.) From his Faithfulness; *Which keepeth Truth for ever.* (3<sup>dly</sup>.) From his Justice; ver. 8. *which executeth Judgment for the oppressed.* (4<sup>thly</sup>.) From his Bounty and Commiseration towards all Men, *Which giveth Food to the hungry: the Lord looseth the Prisoners, the Lord openeth the Eyes of the Blind.* (5<sup>thly</sup>.) From his more singular Care over the Good and Pious; Ver. 10. *The Lord loveth the righteous.* (6<sup>thly</sup>.) From his preserving of Persons as well as providing for them; ver. 9. *The Lord preserveth the Strangers, &c.* (7<sup>thly</sup>.) From his Executions on the evil Doers; *But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.* Lastly, From the Consideration of the Eternity of his Kingdom and Dominion; his never-failing Power, Truth, Justice and Mercy. ver. 10. *The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.*

Praise

*Praise ye the Lord.* And great Reason, truly, for it is but just to rejoyce in God, and praise him who hath given us this Knowledge of him, the Supream Good; and made us know him better and more fully: having given us new and strong Instances of his Power, and Truth, and Love, and tender Mercy; which hath intrusted one of our selves with all these, and the most soveraign Authority ever all to the World's End. Have we not Cause to be satisfied if we consider this? Yea, to believe in the Second Place, which will strongly compose us, that

II. That Condition is best in which we are. For this is but the Consequent of the former. God always makes good his Promise. It is not a Care that he sometimes exercises, but a constant Watchfulness over our Good. And therefore whatsoever our present Estate be, we ought to believe that it is not without his Care, and, for that Reason, must needs be such as he judges best, and therefore so it should seem unto us likewise. If we could always perswade our selves that this is the Condition which God hath promised in which we are, we should be satisfied with it; if not rejoyce, in our Lord's Care over us. Had we attained to this Degree of Faith, we should not be so desirous of Alterations; for fear that if he accorded to us, we should have something that may prove bad for us. We should dread our own Desires as childish and foolish, and say, It is well as it is; it suffices;

suffices; this is God's Pleasure, and for the present, I have Reason to think, it cannot be better. And therefore why should I not be exceedingly well pleased; so well, at least, as not to murmur, nor afflict my self, no more than I do in that which we call a better Estate?

So necessary a Duty this is, that even they who had a rich and plentiful Fortune promised to them, yet were bound to believe that another was at present better for them, and in that to be satisfied: And their not being so, was their great Sin, and exposed them to great Miseries. The *Israelites*, I mean, to whom God said that he would give a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, became high Offenders against him by being no more contented in a Wilderness! which he would have them take in their way to that *Canaan*. One of their Sins is thus described, *Psal. cvi. 13. They soon forgot his Works, they waited not for his Counsel.* In the *Hebrew* it is, (as the Margin of your Bibles will inform you,) *They made haste, they forgot his Works, &c.* And so the *Ixx*, or *Greek* Interpreters, *Εταχυναν*, *They made too much speed*, that is, they were vexed and displeased because they were not instantly brought into that pleasant Land, abounding with all good Things, which God said should be their Portion. They murmured and said (as you read. *Num. xx. 5.*) *Wherefore have ye made us to come out of Egypt to bring us into this evil Place?*



*Place? It is no Place of food, or figs, or Vines, or Pomegranates i. e. not such a Country as you told us God would bestow upon us.* Here are none of those Blessings which we came out of the Land of *Egypt* to enjoy, and which you put us in hope of. If we had thought of this we would have chosen to stay where we were before; for then it was better with us than it is now. This made them take their own way, and forsake God; and upon any new Difficulty presently cry out that they were betrayed by *Moses*, and that he had fed them with deceitful Words, and brought them out of *Egypt* to their undoing. Now because they made such Haste and would not wait God's Season, because they called this *Desart an evil Place* (a bad Condition) wherein they were; therefore he brought them into a worse Estate. He sent many Plagues upon them, and at last, after sundry Murmurings, he shut them quite out of that good Land, to which he intended to conduct them. The true Original of this was their Unbelief, according to that of *Isaiab*, II. xxviii. 16. *He that believeth* (the Word, that is, spoken by the Prophet) *will not make haste.* And therefore we must take heed of such rash Conclusions, if we have any Faith. We must never say, this is an evil Condition; this is an unsupportable Calamity. And we have the more Reason to be patient, because we have not such Promises of temporal Things as they had, and therefore have not the Temptation to think in any Adversity,

verity, that God doth not take care over us; but ought to rest the more perswaded that by this Means God will bring us to better Things which we have his Word for. We are never (as I have said heretofore) out of our way to them, unless we will turn aside from following of God: And there where we are, we should be confident it is best for us quietly to remain, till he be pleased to order otherwise, who is the Disposer of all Things. Thus we shall find our selves very much comforted; and we shall also put our selves in the readiest Way to any other, more plentiful, Condition, when God sees it good for us.

III. But above all, let us believe the Promises concerning the Life to come; for the Perswasion of them will yield the most abundant Refreshment unto us, in this Life present. There is no such Way to Contentment, as to live in a constant Expectation and assured Hope of the Rest which is prepared for the People of God. With the Thoughts of this it is that the Apostle comforts the Christian *Hebrews* in the Midst of all their Sufferings, as *Moses* did their Forefathers in the Wilderness, with the Promise of Rest in the Land of *Canaan*. I have shown you as much already, and therefore I shall mention but one place in that Epistle, *Hebr. vi. 19.* where he calls this Hope, *An Anchor of the Soul, sure and steadfast; which entreteth into that within the Veil.* It will keep us, that is, if it be well grounded in our Souls, as an Anchor doth



doth the Ship, from being driven with the Storm, and swallowed up in the Waves and Billows of this troublesome World. We shall be preserved from the Violence of those Winds which blow without us, and of the more fierce Gusts of our own Passions and Desires that are within us. For it is fastned in Heaven; it enters within *the Veil*. That is, it depends upon the stedfast Promise of God, who hath undertaken to bring us into his own most holy Place, where he himself dwells, and into which Jesus is gone, and whither none of these Troubles can follow us: For none can enter thither, but only good and holy Persons. As the High-Priest, you know, and he alone could go within the Veil, to appear before the Mercy-seat where the Majesty of God sate; all the rest being prohibited to enter into it; so that it was a Place free from any Approaches, but only of him that God would admit into it. Even such a Place is that, where our High-Priest Christ Jesus now appears in the Presence of God for us; secure from the Assaults of any Enemies, free from the Invasion of any Troubles, a Mountain of Joy and Gladness, whether none can ascend but only pious Persons; who are now made Priests unto God, for ever to praise him and bless him, together with our Lord, in that high and holy Place to which he is ascended. Let us lay hold then on this Promise. Let us cast our Anchor on this Rock: And it will not be in the Power of any Thing to trouble



ble us; while we see our selves in no more Danger (let the worst that can come) but only to be carried thereby to this Place of Security, Ease, Rest, and eternal Repose.

And let me add thus much before I leave this Consideration: that God never more made good his Word to the *Israelites*, than when they were in the sorest State of Afflictions, and under the most miserable Oppressions. One of his Promises you remember was, that they should be multiplied like the Stars of Heaven, or the Sand upon the Sea-Shore. Now, if you mark their Story well, you will find that during the Days of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, which was about two Hundred Years, they were increased to no more than Seventy-five Persons. This was the Number that went down into *Egypt*; which proved you know an House of Bondage, after *Joseph* was Dead, and they became no better than Slaves. But then, notwithstanding, was the time that they encreased exceedingly. Then they were fruitful; and the more the *Egyptian* Tyrant oppressed them, the more they fructified and grew numerous. So that in the Space of about as many more Years, as those now named, they were become a mighty Nation; and there marched out of *Egypt* no less than six hundred Thousand Men, besides Children, *Exod.* xii. 37. A vast Increase! And a great Encouragement to depend upon the Promises of God, which we shall then find the greatest Comfort of, when we

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may be apt to think our Condition is most sad and miserable. The more we endure here with Submission to God, the more Satisfaction we shall find in the Thoughts of Heaven; the more we shall rejoyce in hope of the Glory of God, the more will our Refreshments and Joyes be multiplied, and the more will the most excellent Graces and Fruits of the Spirit be increased, even as the Seed of *Abraham* was, in the Time of their Affliction. By continuing patiently in well-doing, we shall feel our Hearts filled with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. And for that End,

## VIII.

We must live in the Exercise of *Divine Love*, which is the proper Work of that Faith I have now spoken of. Let us but love God with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls, and all our Strength, and then we shall not easily be discontented with any Thing that he doth. And is there not great Reason that we should love him most passionately, when we consider what he hath done, and what he hath promised farther to do for us? Need I stay to perswade you to enlarge your Hearts in the greatest Affection to his divine Goodness? Your own Minds will instruct you and excite you to it, if you will but give them leave to reflect, how deeply you are indebted to him, and how amiable he is, and how desirable

desirable it is to be still more beloved by him: Let us proceed then to consider, how this Love of God, will charm all our unquiet and troublesome Passions, and put our Souls into the sweetest and most pleasing Humour. For (1<sup>st</sup>.) When our Heart is thus full of him, there can be but little Room (as I have formerly said) for any Thing else. Some troublesome Thoughts, may enter in, but they cannot dwell there; for the Love of God possessing the Heart, will thrust them out again. And (2<sup>dly</sup>.) The Love likewise, which we feel towards him, is very powerful to beget a Perswasion in us that he loves us so intirely, as to take a Complacency and Delight in us. For our Love is the Product of his: and nothing is more comfortable, than to think that God loves us. Love also, (3<sup>dly</sup>.) Is apt to make us well pleased with all that they do, to whom we bear an hearty Affection. We take nothing ill at their Hands. We think they mean well, especially if we be satisfied of their Wisdom and Judgment, as well as their kind Inclinations towards us. It pleases us that they should please themselves. And therefore if we love God, it will bring forth the same Satisfaction in all his Providences. We shall love them, because we love him, and believe that he loveth us. Nay we find: (4<sup>thly</sup>.) That we can be content voluntarily to displease our selves, I mean, to suffer many Things which otherwise we should avoid, for the sake of one, that we love. And therefore



therefore how can the Love of God fail to reconcile us to that which he orders, by his excellent Will? Though we be not pleased with the Thing it self, yet for Love's sake we shall be pleased. And indeed, (5<sup>thly</sup>.) The Love of God, is directly opposite to all inordinate Self-love, which is the Root of all Discontents; and therefore this divine Love must needs be the Root of true Satisfaction. Contentment is a Stability of the Soul, whereby it stands in one Temper. It is a pious Indifference, a steadfast Unconcernedness in all Things, compared with God's Love and Favour. And how is that to be had, but only by such a strong Love to him, as conquers the Love of our selves, and Other Things? As long as that inordinate Love of our selves reigns, it carries us Headlong to every Thing, that is pleasing to any of our carnal Appetites. It makes us range up and down the World, in Pursuit of every Thing, to which we have a Fancy. It makes us vex, if we be crossed: And sets us in a restless Motion, without any Possibility of ever fixing our selves. And therefore till it be vanquished, we are not like to find Contentment. Now the Love of God being of the quite contrary Nature, possesses us of this Happiness. For it *concenters*, and unites all our roveing Thoughts and Affections in one great Good; which we may always have, and which we may alwayes have Satisfaction in. It carries our Souls continually above. It sets us  
out

out of the Reach of these worldly Things; because it raises us beyond our selves, and makes us touch and feel him that is infinitely better: Who also rules and disposes of all those Things according to that excellent Goodness, which we feel to be in his most blessed Nature. Let us love him therefore, as much as we can: And the more we grow in this Love to him, the more we shall be pleased; because every Thing will provoke us to love him.

And if to this Love of God we add, that which is the natural Consequence of it, a great Love to all Mankind, yea, to all God's Creatures, we shall still be the better satisfied: For that which is prejudicial to our worldly Interest, may be very beneficial to others. When we suffer in our private Concerns, the general Good may thereby be promoted; and in this (as the very Heathens considered) we may find

some Contentment. *Εὐ γὰρ πρὸς τὸ ἐγκρίειν κατὰ δῆμον, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ πᾶν δεῖ βλέπειν*, as Plotinus speaks:

For we ought not to have respect merely to that which is agreeable to our particular Desires; but to the whole Universe, of which we are but a little Portion. The Order of all Ages, saith St. Augustine, is just like a fit Song, composed by God *ex quibusdam quasi antithetis*, of certain opposite and contrary Notes; which skilfully mixed together make up a rare Harmony and melodious Concord. Which is the  
very

# S E R M O N XII. 337

very Doctrine of *Solomon*, who, in his Wisdom hath preached the same Lesson; when he saith, *Eccles. vii. 14. In the Day of Prosperity be joyful; but in the Day of Adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that Man should find nothing after him,* i. e. After God had so disposed Things in such Vicissitudes, no Man should be able to alter this Order. And thus *Arnobius* argues rarely well against the Heathens; You find fault, saith he, with several Things as Evil, which to the World perhaps are not Evil. But you measuring all Things by your own particular Convenience and Profit, blame the Events of Nature, and charge them with your false and wicked Opinions. It doth not rain perhaps, and there is Scarcity of Corn: What then? Must every Thing needs serve thee so far, as to take care that thou mayst live in perpetual Delicacy? What if a Man that is desirous to put forth to Sea should complain, that the Winds have not blown a long time; shall we say therefore that a Calm is bad for the World? And what if a Man that is wont to dry and harden his Body in the Sun, should find fault because it doth not shine; shall we say that cloudy Weather is destructive? O Men! know that these Events are not to be weighed *commodulis nostris*, by our trifling Emoluments and Gains, but by the general Reasons of Things, and the Orders of Nature. And if any Thing happen, which doth not favour us and our Designs, must it therefore be

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presently counted Evil, and put into the Number of hurtful Accidents? No such Matter. Whether the World rains, or not rains, it rains, or not rains to it self. Pestilences, Diseases, Famines, and such like Calamities, do but take away, for any Thing thou knowest, that which is exuberant, and by lopping off some Parts, finds a Remedy for, and sets Bounds unto, the Luxuriance of Things. *Tu audeas dicere*, &c. Darest thou then say, that this and that is Evil in the World, whose Original and Cause thou art not able to explain and resolve? And because a Thing hinders thy Delights, and perhaps libidinous Pleasures, wilt thou be so bold as to call it pernicious and intolerably grievous? It seems then, that because the Cold nips thee, and is in danger to freeze thy Blood, there must be no Winter in the World. And because thou art not able to endure the fervent Heat of the Sun, there must be no Summer. Such an Herb is poisonous to thee; ought it therefore not to grow? The *Wolf* tears the silly *Sheep* in pieces; was Nature in fault for producing such a Beast of Prey? It is too proud and haughty a Thing, when thou art not thine own and remainest wholly in another's Possession, to desire thus to prescribe conditions to those who are so much thy Superiours; and to will that to be done which thou in particular wishest, and not what thou findest fixed in Things, by ancient Constitutions. Thus he. To which I may add, that it is also an ill natur'd Thing, to  
measure

measure all Good and Evil merely by our own Conveniences, when we are such an inconsiderable Part of the Whole, and there are so many others to be served as well as we. Let us enlarge our Thoughts but a little beyond our poor selves, and we shall take better Measures. And let us remember that the *Lovers of their own selves*, who would have nothing go besides their own particular Persons, are reckoned among the most hateful Persons; nay, set foremost in the Catalogue of vile and abominable People, 2 Tim. iii. 2. as the poor in Spirit, or contented, are placed, I told you, in the Head of the blessed Company of Christ's Disciples. Alas! what are we that we should stand so much upon our own Wills; and expect that all Things should lean and bend to serve our Interests? Let us first demonstrate, (as the forenamed Author speaks,) before we think of this, whence we are, and that the World was made for us alone; and that we did not come into it, as Strangers from other Regions. Which since we cannot do, let us not imagine that all appertains to us, which is done under the Heavens: for Things are not done with Partiality, but are referred to the Good, and turn to the Account of the Whole.

## IX.

Let us therefore exercise our selves very much to praise God, and, to give Thanks unto him; which the Love of him will neces-

rily provoke and force us to do. This is another most pregnant Rule to fill us with Contentment. And how is it possible that we should want Occasions for this Duty, if we consider all that we do enjoy, and have enjoyed, and still hope to be made Partakers of? There can be no Condition so sad, wherein we may not find Reason to employ our selves in this heavenly Devotion. Which if we give our selves to, it will reward us with continued Pleasures. For besides that then we enjoy our God; we also refresh our Souls with the Memory of our past Enjoyments, and we taste all our Blessings and Comforts over again. They are present to us though they be gone; and they pour out a new Pleasure upon our Spirits, as when we were in Possession of them. The Truth is, we do now again enjoy them, and our Spirits feel them, though they do not touch our outward Man.

Therefore all wise Men, even those who were guided only by the Light of their own Minds, have still put their Disciples in mind of this, when they spoke of Tranquillity and Peace of Spirit, to remember all the past Part of their Life, and the Happiness of it. It is manifest, saith *Plutarch*, that we have our Happiness or Misery lying in our own Minds; for foolish People overlook their present Good, and have their Thoughts wholly intent on what is to come: Whereas prudent Persons, make even those

Goods

*Lib μετ' ἐν-  
δυναίας.*



Goods which are past, by a clear Remembrance of them, to be again present to their Souls. For that which is for a little Moment, only touches us, and then is sensible no more, is all that Fools enjoy; when it is gone by, they think it doth not belong to them, nor is any longer theirs. Just like the Man whom the Poets painted in Hell, always wreathing a Rope of Hay, which he suffered an Ass to eat up as fast as he could wreath it. Such doth a stupid and ungrateful Forgetfulness of all Enjoyments and Performances render every one of us. It will not suffer a Man's Life to be one continued Piece, (*ἐκ ἐκ τὸν βίον ἐν τῇ παρόντι*) having past Things knit to those that are present. It divides to Day from Yesterday, as if it were another Thing: and so it doth again, with to Morrow, as if what is gone had never been.

Let us not be, I beseech you, in the Number of these senseless Fools; but by due Remembrance of all God's Benefits make our Life one continued Piece of Gratitude to him. And if we can find Reason to be thankful for what is past, will not our present Enjoyments, think you, affect us? This is another Counsel of wise Men, that when any ill Accident befalls us (as we speak) that is any Thing grievous to our Nature; we would be sure presently to consider what we enjoy, and fix our thoughts on those delightful and pleasing Things. Is it not very preposterous (saith the same *Plutarch*) for

those very Men who are wont to turn their Eyes from Objects too bright and splendid that they may refresh them with Greens, or some such agreeable Colour, to fix their Eyes notwithstanding on all their Miseries, and pore upon them Night and Day, withdrawing their thoughts wholly from their better Enjoyments? These are like the Person whom his Servant described, when he was askt what he left his Master doing, ἀγαθὸν παρὸντων κακῶν ζητῶντα, seeking, said he, Evil, when good Things are present with him. Why, what good Things have we, will some say? Nay, rather, what have we not? One hath an excellent Reputation; another a pleasant Dwelling; another is happy in his Marriage, another in his Friend. And *Antipater of Tarsus*, when he was a Dying, and reckoned up all the good Things he had enjoyed, forgot not to put in, his safe Voyage from *Sicily* to *Athens*: Δεῖ κὲ τὰ κοινὰ μὴ παρῆσθαι, the most common Blessings are not to be neglected, but to be put upon Account. We ought to rejoyce, saith he, that we live, and that we are well, and that we see the Sun, and that there are no Wars, perhaps, nor Seditious; and that the Earth is till'd, and the Sea open, and that we may speak or hold our Peace, be busy or at rest. And these Things will be the more pleasing to us, if we represent them to our selves as if they were absent: Often thinking how desirable Health is to the Sick, and Peace to these who are harassed with Wars, and a good

good Name and Reputation in a City, to one that is a Stranger. By which meanes these Things will not seem great and precious to us only when we lose them, but while we enjoy them. For the Loss of any Thing, sure, doth not add a Price to it. It was worth as much before if we could have seen it. But as *Arche-silaus* said, many Men are wonderful exact and curious in judging of another's Poems, Writings, Statues, or Pictures: but their own Life, having in it many delightful Passages, they wholly neglect, and admire always the Fame and Fortune of other Men. Just like an Adulterer who is fond of his Neighbour's Wife, and cares not for his own. This is so hateful a Quality, that *the unthankful* are also put among those Persons of a black Character, whom I mentioned before, 2, *Tim.* iii. 2. On the other Side, the Apostle seems to make this a peculiar Character of a Christian, that he thanks God in every Thing. I am sure he sets a peculiar Remark upon this Duty, as I shew'd when I discoursed some time ago upon those Words, 1 *Thess.* v. 18. *In every Thing give Thanks: For this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* In every Thing, that is impossible will some say. No; it is not. The Will of God hath made it possible, and made it our Wisdom too so to do. If thou sufferest any Thing that is evil, saith *St Chrysostom*, if thou wilt it is not Evil. Give God Thanks, and the Evil is changed into Good. Remember



*Job*, he saith, *Shall we receive Good from the Hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive Evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.* This is a truly grateful Mind to give Thanks even in Adversity. This is a noble Spirit, there is something excellent and beyond the ordinary Rate in this, to acknowledge God, not only for Benefits, but for Chastisements. When thou givest Thanks in Prosperity, thou doest but pay a Debt, but when thou givest Thanks in Adversity, thou makest God thy Debtor. For he that receives a Benefit and is thankful for it, doth but return what he owes; but he that receives an evil Thing and is notwithstanding thankful, hath something, we may think, owing to him. God takes it very kindly at his Hand, and thinks himself obliged by it. And is it not a great Satisfaction to have such an one indebted to us? a Pay-master so able, so liberal, so wise both to know what is the best Recompence for us, and when is the best time to bestow it? Let us not then be so much our own Enemies as not to practise this Duty at all times, in every Thing. For (as a *Spanish* Writer thinks it ought often to be inculcated) one Thanksgiving in Adversity, is worth more than many Thousands in a more prosperous Condition. It is more obliging, and endears us more to God; and I am sure it eases our Hearts strangely, and fills us with heavenly Joy and Satisfaction. When it is well with us  
therefore,

therefore, (as St. *Augustine* expresses it,) let us thank God and bless his Mercy; and when it is ill, let us praise and bless his Justice too. And that not only because we still have much to praise him for; but because there may be much Good even in the present Affliction; and it may likewise turn to our greater Good, especially if we thank God for it. It is said of *Phidias*, that he was such an excellent Artist, that he was able to make a Statue, nay, a Figure of one of their Gods out of any Materials: Not only of Gold or Silver, of Marble or Ivory, of Brass or Iron; no, nor only of Wax or Wood; but of the most unhewn and ill shapen Log, and of the poorest Dirt or Clay. This made his Skill admired by all. And Christianity professes to make us no less ingenious Artificers; teaching us to draw something of God, of his Wisdom, Justice, Holyness, yea, and of his Love and Goodness too, out of the worst of Things, and those which else would seem ill favoured. Nothing can befall us, but the Gospel learns us such Dexterity and Understanding, that we may turn it to a Blessing, if we will; and no way better than by perpetual Thanksgivings to God, howsoever it fares with us.

This no doubt is a Piece of excellent Learning, and it seems to be proper to Christianity to teach us in *every thing to give thanks*. For Benefits, saith St. *Hierome*, even Idolaters themselves can be thankful; but for Calamities and Miseries, only good Christians, and they

they who had a Christian Spirit in them. Such an one was holy *Job*; whose gracious Deportment one cannot sufficiently admire. For when he was struck with a four-fold Message of grievous Disasters fall'n upon his Children and all his Substance, and when these came one on the Neck of another, giving him no Space to breathe; yet he omitted not to do any Thing, as I told you before, that became either a loveing Father to his Children, or a dutiful Child to his heavenly Father. For, first, he arose and rent his Mantle, and shaved his Head, (as the Custom of Mourners in the eastern Countries was,) whereby he shewed himself sensible of his Loss, and that he was a Lover of his Children. But then he fell to the ground and worshipped, saying, *Naked I came, &c. and naked I shall return, &c. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his Name*: which shewed he was a greater Lover of God, and one that had considered beforehand his Providence, and looked upon all Things as coming to pass thereby. For he doth not say the *Chaldeans*, or the *Sabeans*, or the *Devil* had robbed and spoiled him, but that the Lord had taken away what he gave. Knowing that nothing comes to pass without his wise Providence, who disposes even of the evil Affections of Men, and makes them serve his holy Will. This made him still bless God, and not utter one unhandsome Word, when he was provoked to it, by so many and so great Afflictions. And



And thus the Apostles of our Lord, were as men sorrowful, yet always rejoyceing; as poor, yet making many rich; as haveing nothing, yet possessing all Things, 2. Cor. vi. 10. Yea, some report of St. James, that when he was put to Death by Degrees, first one Member then another being slasht off from the rest, he still said, *Thanks be to God*, and bid them proceed. If they cut off a Joynt of a Finger, *Thanks be to God*, was all they could get from him. If they cut off another Joynt, still he seconded the Execution with another, *Thanks be to God*. And so to every Joynt or Limb that was severed from his Body, he added so many *Deo gratias*, *Thanks be to God*, for all his Benefits. Let us go and do likewise; and we shall find the same Peace and Contentment of Spirit, in the Midst even of our Sufferings, which they found under such long and sharp Torments. This will not only relieve us, but exceedingly raise us; for it is, as I have told you heretofore, to begin Heaven upon Earth, and to joyn our selves with the happy Society of those who feel no Pain at all, but praise God in eternal Joys.

X.

What shall I add more, but that, as a Help to all this, we must get our Minds as well furnished, as we are able, with Store of good Thoughts. The Soul of Man is a busy Thing, and will be working

working within it self. Let it have therefore always at hand Abundance of pleasing and comfortable Thoughts, to entertain and employ it. If there be not Plenty of these still ready to present themselves, and press in upon all Occasions, it will be turning towards its own Mischief, and working upon some Matter or other of its Discontent : But if these be so numerous, that it cannot miss of some of them, but find them still next to the Mind, and forward to offer their Service ; there will no Place be found for the other, or if they thrust in themselves, they will be presently discharged. And is there any want of them ? Need our Minds be unfurnished with a large Provision of them ? Though other Things are not in our Power ; yet our Thoughts are ; And you see by these Discourses that our Minds are fruitful, and will yield us great Plenty of them.

Let us settle as great a Sense therefore, as we can, in our Souls, of God and of all his Attributes. Let us remember continually, that we live and move and have our Being in him ; that all Things are guided by him ; that he hath manifested himself in his Son ; who hath Power and Authority over Angels and Men, and all Creatures. In short, let us remember actually such Things as I mentioned in the Reasons why we should be contented ; and they will not let us be otherwise than well-pleased. The Things that molest and trouble us are near, and press hard upon us ; Now if those Things that should  
comfort

comfort us be far off, and removed at a distance from us, how is it possible we should find any Relief? Let us therefore bring them near to our Souls also, and lay them close to our Hearts, and make them one with us by continual Meditation, that we may feel their Power to revive and refresh us, as great as other Things have to discomfort and vex us. If a Man can think of nothing else, yet let him think of himself. Who is nearer to thee, than that? What is there that thou shouldest desire to know so much as thy self? And if thou wilt not be ignorant of that, thou canst not be discontented. There lieth in every one of us greater Matter of Admiration and Praise, than there doth of Vexation and Complaint. Hear only St. Basil speak a little of this Business.

Thou hast received, saith he, an understanding Soul, by which thou perceivest God, and discoverest with thy Reason the Nature of Things; and reapest the most sweet and pleasant Fruit of Wisdom. All earthly Things wild and tame, all in the Water, all in the Air, are Servants to thee, and subject to thy Command. Is it not thou, O Man, who hast found out all Arts: Dost not thou build Cities; and invent all manner of Things, which conduce either to the Supply of our Necessities, or the Advancement of our Pleasure? Hath not thy Reason found out a Path in the great Seas? And taught small Vessels to cut their Way through the dreadful Waters?

*Hom. eis to, πρῶτον  
ἐξεύρεται.*



Waters ? Do not the heavenly Orbs show thee their Order, and their comely Motions ? Dost not thou understand their Dances, and perceive the Musick and Harmony which they make ? Τι ἐν μικροψυχείς ; What's the Matter then that thou art so faint hearted ? Why doth thy Mind fail thee, and grow so little and feeble ? Is it for such an one as thee to shrink up in Trouble of Spirit, because thou hast not, suppose, a fine Horse with goodly Trappings, as another Man hath ? And yet thou hast the Sun all the Day running his Course, and showing thee his illustrious Face. Thou hast not the Splendour of Silver and of Gold ; but thou hast the Moon and the Stars which surround thee with a glorious Light. And to what purpose is it to reckon all the rest ; These are humane Things ; they that follow are Divine. Was it not for thy sake, that God vouchsafed to be conversant here on Earth ? Did he not distribute the Gifts of the Holy Ghost to Men like thy self ? Death is abolished ; the Resurrection is preached ; the divine Commandments, which perfect this Life, are published ; there is a plain way to God, by keeping them ; the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared ; Crowns of Righteousness are ready for those, who will not shun the Labours of Virtue. Attend but thy self, and finding all these, and many other Things there, the Effect of it must needs be this : Καὶ ἀπολαύσεις μὲν τῶν παρόντων, ἔμικροψυχῆς δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἐνδεόν : Thou wilt both enjoy that which is present, and not  
be

*be basely dejected for that which is absent.* Thou wilt never lose the Pleasure of what thou hast, nor be in Pain for that which thou hast not. The Sight of so many goodly Things will comfort thy Spirit, when it begins to faint; and raise thee up, when thou art ready to sink. They will bid thee be of good cheer; both because thou hast the Possession of them, and because, unless thou wilt be so careless, thou canst never lose them.



A PRAYER.



A  
P R A Y E R.

**O** Most blessed and glorious God, who art to be acknowledged and praised by all understanding Creatures, as much as they are able : For according to thy Name, so ought thy Praise to be; very great and excellent. And so likewise ought to be our Fear of thee, our Faith in thee, our Love to thee, our Desire after thee, and our Delight and Joy in thy Love. All good Men have magnified and extolled thy Power, by which the Heaven, the Earth, and the Seas, and all Things therein, were created. They have acknowledged thy Truth and Faithfulness which endureth for ever. Thy Justice and Mercy have been wonderful in their Eyes, and all Ages have celebrated thy particular Care of those that fear thee, and put their Trust in thee. Thou hast preserved the Strangers, and relieved the Fatherless and Widows; and, blessed be thy Goodness, I know that thou reignest King for ever unto all Generations.

But above all I rejoice in this, that thou hast not disdained to appear in our Flesh : But hast loved and honoured us so far as to secure our Hope and Confidence in thee, by dignifying our Nature at thine own Right-hand, with the greatest Glory.

What



*What Praise, what Love, what Joy, what Service, is great enough to render to thee, O Lord, who art so high, and whose Kindness is so great, far exceeding all our Conceptions! I make thee, O my God, a Present of all that I have, with the most ardent and hearty Affection: Desiring but to be so happy as to have a perpetual Sense of thee possessing my Soul with delightful Thoughts of thee, and engaging my Heart to the most passionate Love of thee, and preserving me in perfect Quietness and Peace, by an entire Trust in thee.*

*I will Trust in thee, O Lord, at all Times. I will love thee with all my Heart, and with all my Soul, and with all my Strength. The Meditation of thee shall be always sweet unto me. I will rely on thy precious Promises, that thou wilt never leave me nor forsake me: And still be giving Thanks unto thee in every Thing, according to thy Will declared in Christ Jesus.*

*Thanks be unto thee, that thou hast made me such an excellent Creature; and endued me with a Mind so great and large; and to all the Riches of Nature, added those great Treasures of thy Grace in Christ Jesus, which are unsearchable and inestimable. I thank thee for all the blessed Fruits of his Passion, Resurrection, and Exaltation. For the Power of the Holy Ghost; for the Service of better Creatures than these which thou hast put in Subjection under our Feet, even the Ministry of the Celestial Host, and all the Kindness I have received by their means.*

*Vouchsafe, I beseech thee, to replenish my Mind more and more, with Abundance of Christian Wisdom. Fill me with Holy Thoughts. Make them familiar and natural to me; that they may be ready at Hand, on all Occasions, to present themselves, and to quell all those unquiet Thoughts or Desires, that are apt at any time to rise in my Heart. Settle my Faith and Hope in thee; and make them more strong and vigorous. Raise that Love, which I acknowledge is due unto thee, to a greater Height; that I may feel the Power of it composing my Spirit, and making me well pleased in what pleaseth thee, and satisfying me fully with a constant Belief of thy Love and Kindness towards me. Raise me, O God, to that noble Pitch of Faith in thee, that I may be able to embrace my present Condition, whatsoever it be, as best for me: And accept of all Crosses from thee with an equal and thankful Mind; and wait on thee with a patient and resigned Will, for what thou seest Good for me; and not be too hasty, in my Desires of Deliverance from the greatest Burthens that may lie upon me.*

*Preserve that Divine Reason which thou hast inspired me withal, by thy Holy Gospel, in such Clearness, Force, and Activity; that it may perfectly subdue and govern all my Passions, and be ever at Hand to assist me against all Temptations to discontented Thoughts and Fretfulness of Spirit. Possess my Heart, O my God, so entirely therewith, that I may be of good Comfort, yea Rejoice, in every Estate, and still say, Thanks be to God, thanks be to God: Until I am set free from*

*from all the Troubles of this Life, and from the Straitness and Burthen of this Body too ; that I may give thee Thanks, with more enlarged Thoughts and Affections in the happy Company of the Blessed. Unto which I hope thou wilt conduct me by all that befalls me, according to thy wise Love manifested in Christ Jesus ; by whom all Honour, Glory, and Praise, all hearty Love and chearful Obedience be rendred to thee Eternally. Amen.*

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# SERMON XIII.



H E B. XIII. 5.

-----*Be content with such Things as  
ye have :-----*



Have finished the great and principal Rules for the leading a contented Life, which are contained in Faith, Hope, and Charity. Something to trouble and molest us, as hath been often said, we must always expect, and not imagine that we can find *ἕνα βίον ἀλυπον*, some one Sort of Life, void of all Grievances and Vexations. We do but lose our Time and Labour, if we go in the search of any such State; whether we fancy it to be in the Country private Life, or in the Unmarried, or even in that of great Princes and Kings: For as *Plutarch* (whose Words these are) hath observed out of *Menander*,---*ἔστι συγγενὲς τι λύπη καὶ βίος*, there is a certain Kindred between Life and

and Trouble. You cannot divide it from the delicate Life ; the Honourable hath its Company ; and it grows old with Men of meaner Condition.

But God hath not left us without a Remedy : That's our Comfort. And it chiefly lies in divine Faith ; and a heavenly Hope which springs from thence ; and in a great Love and Gratitude to God, and an hearty Affection for all Mankind.

But besides those general Rules which have been mentioned, there are certain particular Advices, that are not unworthy the Consideration of those who would live quietly in this World ; and will tend very much to make their Passage thorough it more easy ; less offensive to others, and consequently less troublesome to themselves. I will briefly propound them to you at this time ; and conclude them, as I did the former, with a Direction or two which are of the largest Use.

I.

The first is, *To have something still to do.* For though Idleness seem easy, and to have nothing to trouble it ; it lays upon us a great Burthen of unquiet Thoughts, and breeds a Number of vexatious Desires. If our Condition therefore leads us neither to publick nor private Business, let us employ our time in honest Studies. That is *Seneca's* Rule, I remember, to a Man who affects not publick Employment, or

cannot have it, nor finds much to do in domestic Affairs; *In studia conferas, quod subduxeris Officiis*; bestow that on Study, which thou takest away from Business. By this means a Man shall be, *Nec sibi gravis, nec aliis supervacuuus*, neither burthensome to himself, nor impertinent to others. He will invite many to his Friendship: The best Persons will love his Company. For even an obscure Vertue cannot always lie hid: It gives some Signs of it self, which will make it honoured and courted.

And here it will not be amiss to subjoin, that the very same Rule is to be observed which was given before concerning the Desire of Riches; not to affect too much of them. *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, but feed me with Food convenient for me*; is the Prayer of Agur, Prov. xxx. 8. Which the Gentile Wisdom conspires with in these Words, *The best Measure of Money is that, which neither falls so low as Poverty, nor is very far removed from it.* And by the same Measure we

*Seneca, cap.  
8. de Tranq.*

should govern our selves, say they, in our Studies. Many Books are a Trouble. Like Variety of Meats they burthen the Stomach or breed Diseases, but do not give much Nourishment. Or like a Man that is always in Travel from Place to Place; he hath many Inns, but no Friends, and few Acquaintance. Multitude of Books distract Men's Minds, and therefore when thou canst not read all that thou hast, it is enough to have all that thou readeest. It is a sign of a squeamish

*Id. Epist.  
2.*



squeamish Stomach to be tasting every Thing. Read those that are approved. And if thou wouldst turn aside from one to another, return to the first again, by which thou hast profited. And be sure, saith he, to provide thy self of some Thing every Day, which will serve as a Remedy against Poverty, against the Fear of Death, against the Rest of the Plagues of humane Life. And when thou runnest over many Things, *Unum excerpe, quod illo die concoquas*, Pick out some one Thing, to digest and concoct that Day. But I intend not to insist long upon these Advices, there being many of them, and therefore let us pass to the next. Which is this,

II.

Let us never attempt any Thing in our Enterprises, but what is of good Report, and Praiseworthy. This I find recorded in the Life of a famous Person, that he was wont constantly to comfort himself in this, *Quod nihil tentasset, non laudabile*, that he had never assayed any Thing, but what was laudable. In this, if a Man miscarry, yet it is some Comfort to have endeavoured it. And he may again renew his Endeavours, according as the same Person was wont to say; *Let us resume our Work, and not Despair*. Fishermen do not break their Nets, because they sometimes cast them in vain, and catch nothing.

*Gassend. in vita  
Peireskii.*

## III.

The Third is, to *Do nothing of consequence without Deliberation and good Advice.* I do not mean only of our own, but of our Friends also. For if any Thing fall out ill, they will help to bear a part of it.

## IV.

The next is, to *Repent of nothing, that we have done advisedly*: For we could not tell then how to do it better. These two are joined together by the wise Son of Syrach, from whom I borrowed them, *Ecclus. xxxii. 19. Do nothing without Advice; and when thou hast once done it, repent not.*

## V.

Another Rule is, to *Be of a stable and fixed Resolution*; and not to be still changing of our Purpose. No Man's Life can be quiet and orderly, who hath not a settled Judgment and Intention. And especially to run after a new Thing, before we have finished the former; is the way never to be at rest. But as we should not be uncertain in our Designs and Desires, always fickle and given to Change, So

VI, We

VI.

*We ought not to fear those Changes which will come unavoidably.* Let us accustom our Thoughts and reconcile our Affections to them, by considering that every Thing in this World is effected by Changes. It is *Antoninus's* Observation, Τι δαί φιλῆται, &c. What I beseech you is more friendly and familiar to universal Nature, than Changes? Thou canst not go into a Bath, unless the Wood be changed whereby it is heated. Nor canst thou be nourished, without the Change and Alteration of thy Food. No profitable Thing can be produced, but by the Change of something or other. Methinks then that thou shouldest discern, that Changes in thy self are no less necessary and good too, in order to some useful and excellent End.

L. 7. S. 8.

But since there will be Changes in our Condition, it makes the next Advice necessary, which is,

VII.

To order Things so, as *Not to be taken unprovided.* For which End we must think before-hand of all that may come, even of the worst. That which we look for, will be less troublesome to us. It was the wise Observation of *Carneades*, that the greatest Grievs of our Life come from hence, that the Tempest arose unexpected. It is just as if a great many

Guests



Guests should come in upon us when we are wholly unprovided, and there is neither Meat, nor Fire, nor Servants, nor any Thing else in the House. Then it is, that we run up and down, and keep a stir, and make a noise, and all is in a great Confusion. Whereas, if we had known of it before, all Things would have been done in quiet, and we should have given them Entertainment with Ease and Pleasure.

The old Story was, that if the *Wolf* saw a Man before he saw him, the Man was struck dumb: but the same hapned to the *Wolf*, if he was first espied. The Tale may be thus interpreted; that if Dangers surprise us before we are aware of them, they are wont to bereave us of our Succours, otherwise we can defend our selves well enough, or receive them without harm. Sudden Frights commonly astonish us, and take away our Voice, and extreamly trouble us; but that which we are prepared for, can make no such terrible Assault nor frightful Noise, but silently falls upon us. If we foresee what may come, it will not give us such a Shock, as it will if we have no Thoughts of it. Fore-sight will put us upon the Use of all those Means, which I have formerly discoursed of, and therefore we are not to suffer our selves to be without it. Take Advice of the Son of Syrach, Ecclus. xviii. 25, 26. *When thou hast enough remember the Time of Hunger; and when thou art rich think upon Poverty and Need. From the Morning unto the Evening Time is changed, and all Things are soon done before*

before the Lord. This you will find he condemns in another Chapter as a great Folly, *Ecclus. xi. 25.* That, in the Day of Prosperity there is a Forgetfulness of Affliction, and in the Day of Affliction there is no Remembrance of Prosperity. If we will be wise and happy we ought to ballance one of these with the other, that is, In the Day of good things to remember Evil, and in the evil Day to remember Good. But enough of that.

VIII.

It will add also much to our Tranquillity if we take care to *Contend with no Man unnecessarily*; no not with those of whom we are like to get the Victory. It is better, a great deal, to sleep in the Quiet of Peace, than to be awakned from our Repose by all the Trumpets of Conquest, and the loudest Shouts and Acclamations of Praise. Suppose a Man will say that which you know not to be true, let it pass, rather than dispute it with him, if he be a captious, proud, and quarrelsome Person.

IX.

Another is, *Not to scoff at any Body.* For few can endure to hear themselves abused; or pass it by without an Endeavour of severe Revenge. The Mention of this is sufficient, and the Reason of it apparent.

X. It

## X.

It is no less prudent as well as pious, to *Speak ill of no Man*, except when it is necessary to do some Good to others. This is one of the *Psalmist's* Counsels for a contented Life. *What Man is he that desires Life, and loveth many Days, that he may see Good? Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy Lips that they speak no Guile*, Psal. xxxiv. 12, 13. This is so true, that it is safest not so much as to open our Ears to others, that speak Evil of their Neighbours. If we do not entertain their Speeches, they recoil and wound the Speaker; if we receive them, they wound and trouble us.

And indeed the Tongue is wont to procure us so much Mischief that,

## XI.

Wise Men (let me add in the next place) have advised us, if we would live happily, to accustom our selves to *Speak sparingly*, at least, among Strangers: especially concerning great Persons it is best not to speak at all. This is a Rule which *Arrianus* gave in his time, when there was Danger from such Men. Words though innocently meant, yet may be ill interpreted. And it is better (as *Cardan* was wont to say) to premit an hundred Things worthy perhaps to be heard, than

*L. de vita prop.  
Cap. 50.*

to



to say one that should not have been spoken. Again,

XII.

It is of great Service to accustom our selves to be *cheerful*, and to find all the Means we can to preserve our selves in that Temper. For we shall the more easily pass by a great many Occasions of Trouble without much Notice, and feel the rest less heavy and more supportable. Sadness never did any Body Good, nor lightned any Man's Calamity; but is a new Misery it self. It is apt also to look on Things otherwise than they are: for it sees them in the Twilight, and not in the clear Sun-shine of our Spirits. *Seneca* I think, was in the right, when he said, that of the Two one had better imitate *Democritus*, than *Heraclitus*. For he that laughs at Things, looks upon them but as slight and vain: And so they will be the more equally enjoyed, or equally born. There is more of Humanity also in it to smile at Things, than to frown and lament. He that laughs deserves better of Mankind, because he leaves some good Hope; whereas the other bewails that which he despairs of amending. But the best of all is to receive all Accidents quietly with a smooth and placid Temper: Neither with much Laughter, nor with Lamentations.

XIII. IF

## XIII.

If we would live happily, we must likewise take Care that we *Be no busy Bodies*. For such People are very unacceptable to others, and uneasy to themselves. They have a great deal to do, when in Truth they do nothing but trouble themselves, and the Neighbourhood. This is *Antoninus's Rule* *Lib. 3. de* *Seipso. S. 4.* *Do not trouble thy self about other Men's Matters, unless it be for the common Benefit.* For Example, saith he, do not be still fancying what such a Person is a doing, and why he doth this or that, and what he saith, and what he designs and contrives, with such like Things. This is but to wander from One's self, and to forsake the Custody of his own Soul. Therefore avoid these superfluous Thoughts, which belong not unto thee. For upon this depends, as *Seneca* hath observed, that *teterrimum vitium*, most foul and odious Vice of listning after, and Inquisitiveness into the Secrets of others: Desiring to know much, even those Things which are neither safely told, nor safely heard. A Man that would live in Peace, should be so far from this busy prying Humour, that he should not let his secret Thoughts run this way: But rather accustom himself, (as the aforesaid great Emperor and Philosopher speaks,) always so to employ his Mind, that if any other Person be so curious as  
to

to demand of him what he is thinking of, he may not be afraid to tell him. By this means, saith he, it will appear that all Things in thee are simple, good natured, sociable, and void of Envy, Emulation, Suspicion, Impurity, or any such like Thing, which should put thee to the Blush. Such a Man ought to be rankt among the best and the happiest; being *ιερευς τις*, a Priest and Minister of God, who uses with due Respect that divine Image, which is within him.

XIV.

And to make our Lives still the less burthen some, we must *not be too stiff, and rigid in the Form and Manner of our Life*; nor too peremptorily resolved in Things, that are not absolutely Good or Evil. We shall but disorder our selves the more, by keeping too strictly to our own Orders in indifferent Things. We must be easy and yielding, if we would be happy; and not stick too pertinaciously, no not to our own Determinations and Appointments. We must comply with Occasions; provided Lightness do not move us to it: For that is as great an Enemy to Peace as the other. All Pertinaciousness, and obstinate Adherence to our own set Forms of Life, is anxious and miserable: Because Accidents will always contend with us, and struggle against us; and still be wrestling something from us. And Levity is as  
grievous,



grievous, if not more : Because it hath no certain Bounds, nor can contain and rest it self in any Thing. Both are very contrary to Tranquillity, To be able to alter Nothing, and to endure Nothing.

## XV.

*A simple, and a kind of careless Behaviour is best also for those who would live in Tranquillity.* They cannot be happy, who, as *Seneca* is wont to speak, do *anxiè se componere* ; compose themselves, and form their Behaviour with an anxious Study and Care. Such a constant Observation of themselves in every small Thing, torments and racks them. It cannot be a pleasant Life, because too solicitous ; though all Things should succeed as they desire. But that is not to be expected ; and therefore as there is no End of their Cares, so their Vexation is perpetual ; because many Things will still fall out against their Wills. They are surprized oftentimes, and do not appear the same as usually. This they are afraid of ; and when it happens, they fret to be found out of their set and studied Garb and Way. On the contrary, what Pleasure is there in a sincere, unaffected, and self-adorned Simplicity ; which feigns nothing, but shows it self as it is ? Some may despise it, but it is better to bear that Despise, than to be tormented with perpetual Constraints, in the acting of a Person which is not our selves.

This

This Rule of *Seneca* I take to be the same with that of *Antoninus*, which is brief and easily remembred, *ἐν τῷ συντομῇ αἰ τρεῖς*, ever go the shortest Way; and Lib. 4. Sect. 7. the shortest Way is that of Nature, for it is streight on; and a Right Line, which hath no Crookedness, is always the shortest. Near of kin to this is another Rule, which is,

XVI.

To avoid too much *Niceness* and *Curiosity* in all Things; For this is an Humour, which is very hard to please; it is so wanton that it regards not what it hath, and will not be much better satisfied with what it desires: And truly it is a Sign that such Persons are in no great need of what they crave; if they had less they would be more thankful, even for those very things which they now contemn. According to the Proverb among the *Hebrews*, *Qui insufflat poculo suo non sitit*, He is not a Thirst that blows into his Cup: That is so curious, they mean, as to stand to to blow away the Froth. Again,

XVII.

A Man that would live in Peace, must not much regard the vain *Censures* of others, and their trifling *Opinions* of him. No Man's Esteem is worth any thing, but his who lives according to Nature, saith *Antoninus*; as for other Men, remember but how they live at home, and how abroad; how they are in the Night, and how in the Day; who the Persons are that they mingle

themselves withal and make their Companions, and you will never think the Praise of such Men worth any thing, nor that it is worth your Pains to study to please those, who cannot tell always how to please themselves: I might add, that their Calumnies are no more to be regarded neither: For if we despise them, they gain no Belief at all; whereas if we receive them with Anger and Desire of Revenge, they will be confirmed with many, and seem to be confessed and acknowledged.

This is a certain Rule, which *Erasmus* inculcates to a great Friend of his, *Lib. 2. Ep. 27. Petro, Ægidio.* *Verè magni est animi, &c. It is truly the Part of a noble and great Mind* to neglect some Injuries, and to have neither Cares nor Tongue for some Mens Reproaches. And this is as certain, that we can never be at Rest, if, *ad rumorem componimur*, we form and shape our selves according to the common Talk and Rumour: We must not follow other Mens Opinions, but our own; nor fashion our Behaviour and Conversation according to their Humour, but our own Reason: Nothing hath intangled Men in greater Mischiefs than this, that they are overborn by the common Cry, and suffer themselves to be governed by the Fancies, and the Discourses, and the Censures of the Multitude. This makes even That seem best which is received with greatest Applause and common Consent; so that Men do not live according to their own Mind, but after the Mode: By this Means, saith *Seneca*, the whole World is undone; for



# S E R M O N XIII. 371

as you see it is in a great Crowd, when many People thrust and press one another, if one fall he draws a great many after him ; so it is here, the first destroys those that follow ; no Man errs, but he is the Cause of Error to another ; Men follow their Leaders, and while every Man had rather believe than judge, we never judge of Life it self, but always go upon Credit. I mention this, because it springs many times from the foolish Awe wherein we stand of the Opinion of others concerning us, which makes us go, not as we should, but in their Road.

Since Men are so apt therefore to follow one another in Folly, it will be fit to add this as the next Rule.

## XVIII.

Be curious in *choosing your Company*; always shunning that which is bad: For there is great Danger, as the aforesaid Author hath well noted, in the Conversation of those who are unlike us. It disorders some Thing that was well composed, it renews ill Affections, and whatsoever is weak or not well cured in the Mind, it exulcerates and makes it sore again. Behold this rotten Apple said *Hier. Cardan.* to a young Man whom he was dissuading from ill Society, it hath corrupted a whole Heap of good Fruit ; but shew me, if thou canst any Heap of sound Apples, tho' never so great, that could cure one which was rotten. It is a certain Truth, *Pravi semper obsunt, etiamsi benevolos se simulant* ; Naughty

*Men ever do us Hurt, tho' they carry themselves as if they had a good Will to us; therefore let them be avoided, and suffer not your own, or their good Nature, to deceive you into their Fellowship, to which Mischief you will be the less prone, if you can learn to be good Company for your selves. These two indeed are to take their Turns, Company and Solitude; the former of which will make us have a Desire of our selves, and the latter of other Men; one of them will be a Remedy for the other, for Solitude will cure the Loathing we may have of Company, and Company again will take away the Tedioufness of Solitude. But let us never be so weary of our selves, as to prefer any sort of Company before being alone. Let it be good, for else we are better without them, though we be never so dull and indisposed. Agair,*

## XIX.

*Plutarch, I remember, advises, that when we are alone, we would take into our Company, excellent Men who are gone before us, τὰς ἐνδοξὰς*

*ἀρετὰς; as his Words are, consider well and propound to our selves the*

*Examples of famous Men who have born Affliction equally. And he hath a long Discourse to show, that this Contemplation conduces much to Composure of Mind; and Instances in many great Men among their Heathen Worthies, who had done nobly in their Generations: But there are no Patterns of Contentment and Patience like those which the holy Scriptures have set before*

*us,*

us, on which if we would fix our Eyes, we should find the same Effect of it, that a Man doth when he is in a Fever, and sees others taste that with Delight and Pleasure, which seems to him so bitter and disgustful, that he spits it out of his Mouth; he concludes presently, that it is not the Meat and Drink, but his Disease, which is the Cause of that ill Savour. Just so, saith he, shall we cease to complain and accuse our Fortune, when we see others receive the same Things chearfully, and with a merry Heart, which we nauseate and reject with a sower Countenance.

XX.

But of all Company, when we would divert our selves, there is none like that of *a faithful Friend*; nor shall we easily find any thing below God and the Hope of Immortality, that will procure us so much Ease, Comfort and Refreshment in the Troubles of this Life: The very Thought that we have of such an one, is no small Comfort, if that be true which hath been said by a Man of no small Account,

*Magnum sapientiæ indicium est, habere præstantem amicum, It is a great Token*

Hieron.  
Cardanus.

*of Wisdom, to have a worthy Friend.* It is, no small Credit to us, and declares we are worth something our selves: But then the Usefulness of such a Person it would be too long to declare; he may help to keep us from the many Troubles and Dangers, by prudent Counsels or powerful Interest; and when we are in Trouble, he will



afford us his Help; whereas a Flatterer will only give us his Advice; He will both comfort and relieve us, if he be able; And what can give such Delight to the Mind! What a Blessing is this, to have a Breast prepared, wherein we may safely lay up our Secrets! Whose Conscience we less fear than our own, whose Discourses may lenify our Solitude; whose Opinion may give us Direction; whose Chearfulness may dissipate Grief, and whose very Sight will give us a Pleasure: They are the Words of *Seneca*, who adds, that it is not needful to advise, that he be a good Man whom we receive into this Relation; for to make Friendship with the Bad, is to chuse to live in the House of one who hath the Plague: All good Men are not to be chosen; not the sad and heavy, who are always bewailing every thing, and take all Occasions to complain; let the Faithfulness and Kindness of such a Person be never so well assured, yet a Companion that is still sighing, and ever in Perturbation, will be an Enemy to our Tranquility, he will disturb our Repose, however otherwise he may be friendly to us.

Who then, will some say, is fit for a Friend? I had rather tell you in the Words of another Person than my own, because they carry more Authority: He that neither magnifies the Riches, nor Life it self, who is simple and plain-hearted, who is vehement in his Affection, and ardent in his Love, *siquidem amicitia affectus est vehemens*, for Friendship is a strong and vehement Affection to one Person more than another. To  
which

which he adds, *That doth not pretend Friendship to many, for that will be rather Familiarity than Friendship.*

But I must not pursue this any further, having a few Things more to add; and the next hath some relation to all that hath been said, being necessary to make them good, and establish them in our Minds; which is this,

## XXI.

Be sure to *make your selves real Owners of all these Advices* which have been given you; and have all good Principles ever in a Readiness, as I have elsewhere discoursed. As *Xenophon* exhorts those who are in Prosperity, to be sure to remember to honour the Gods, that so if their Condition change from Fulness to Want, they may have the Confidence to call upon them, *ὡς οὐμενεῖς οὐκ ἄνδρ' ἐστὶν καὶ φίλος*, as those that are their Friends already, and bare a good Will to them; even so must they do, saith *Plutarch*, who would live in Peace and Quiet; all the Discourses or Reasons, which are helpful to us against the Perturbations of our Mind, we ought to be provided with before the Trouble come; for they will be the more profitable and effectual, when they are long before prepared. Just as we see fierce Dogs are exasperated at every Noise, and can be appeased only with the Voice of those to which they are accustomed; so are the raging Passions and Perturbations of the Mind very hard to be laid asleep, unless familiar and

accustomed Notions be nigh at hand to quiet and compose them.

It is with us, as *Seneca* hath observed, just as it is with a Man that is recovered of a long and grievous Disease: There remains a good while after a great Weakness, a slight thing  
 Cap. 2. de Tranquil. offends him, and is apt to cast him down again; and when the Reliques of the Disease are conquered, still he thinks not himself safe, but is disquieted with Suspensions and Jealousies that it may return again. This Person you cannot say is sick, but he is not well accustomed to Health: As there remains a rolling, or a trembling of the Waves of the Sea, or upon a great Lake after the Tempest hath spent its Fury, and the Weather is now grown calm; so there doth in the Mind of Man, which hath good Dispositions in it, until they be well settled there. And therefore the great thing is, *fidem sibi habere, to give Credit to himself*, to believe his own Principles firmly and stedfastly, and to think constantly that he is in the right Way, that so he may be able to keep his Mind equal, and remain in an even State, neither lifting up himself, nor being depressed, for this is Tranquility.

## XXII.

But when all is done, we must be sure to have one thing in a readiness, whatsoever happens, and that is, *an Heart to commend our selves to God*, with perfect Submission to his Will: So *Epicetus* concludes his Book of moral Discourses.



Discourses. *Εν παντί δεχέσθαι εὐχὴν ταύτην, ὥς ἔειπε, ὁ Ζεὺς, &c.* Upon all Occasions be ready and disposed to pray thus, *Lead me, O God, whither thou wilt, I am willing to follow thee, &c.* But I had better give you his Sense in the Words of *Simplicius* his Commentator, who more fully explains his Mind to us.

Cap. 77,  
78, 79.  
Enchir.

The Precepts, saith he, of the Ancients, which were delivered by them at large, being reduced by some learned Men afterward to a few Words, and abridged in brief Sayings, he advises us to have these always ready at hand, both as easy to be remembred, and as very powerful to establish our Belief of those Admonitions, which have the Testimony of famous Men, and are expressed in such pithy Words. And first he commends the Prayer of *Cleanthes*, in these Terms, *Lead me, O God, and thy eternal Council, whithersoever you have determined, for I will follow willingly; if I should hang back, I know I must notwithstanding follow, both with an heavy Heart, and with a guilty Mind for resisting the Will of Heaven;* And this indeed, saith he, is the Sum of moral Discipline, to join our selves with the universal Cause of all Things, and to will wholly to remain united to it, and never to be divided from it; for what can be more absurd, than to bend our Desires and Endeavours against it, and to will that it should follow us, and not we follow it?

The second is the Saying of *Euripides*, which contains the same Sense in different Words, *he who*

*who accommodates himself to Necessity, is wise, and understands divine Things.*

The third Precept which he commends, is that Speech of *Socrates* recorded by *Plato*, which is still to the same Effect, but more compendious, εἰ ταύτη τοῖς θεοῖς φίλον, ταύτη γινέσθω, *if it seem good to God to have it so, let it be so.*

By all which Sayings, of the same Import, put together in the End of his Work, he seems, saith he, to me to intimate to us this great Truth, that the whole Perfection of human Souls is comprised and crowned, εἰς τὴν πρὸς θεὸν ἐπέσφρω, &c. in their Conversion of themselves towards God, and their Conjunction with him in all Things. This is our Business, this compleats our Nature, and consummates our Happiness.

He hath appointed what Part we shall act (as they are wont to speak) upon the Stage of this World; let us act it decently, and our Work is done, and we shall come off with Applause and Praise from Heaven it self. Did you ever hear, saith *Plotinus*, that any Man of Sense reprehended a Play, ὅτι μὴ πάντες ἦρωες εἰν αὐτῷ, because all the Persons in it were not Heroes? No, there is a Clown, and a Slave, and other such like inferiour Persons there introduced; and if you take these away, that will not be beautiful, which is compleated as much by these, as by the rest, whose Condition is more honourable.

Let us not refuse then the Part which is imposed upon us, nor complain that it is not more noble.

noble. There is a Reward due to the meanest, as well as to the greatest, if they act handsomely and do what is enjoyned them.

Thus *R. Israel* brings in the poor *Gibeonites* and Slaves that were only Hewers of Wood, and Drawers of Water, comforting themselves in these Words; Since it is so decreed by Heaven, let us bear it willingly, read the Law early and late; God is our Trust, let his Will be done. And thus I remember an excellent \* Christian Writer concludes part of a Letter of his, containing a Number of Arguments to bear all Afflictions patiently; Among all the Remedies of Grief, saith he, that Rhetoricians and Orators are wont to invent, I find none of more present Efficacy than this, to think that it is *the Lord*, let him do what seemeth good in his Sight: We have deserved worse, and He is no less propitious when He afflicts, than when He doth what we would have Him; He alone knows what is expedient, let Him kill if He will, He cannot will, but what is best; He often saves by slaying, and slays by saving; He is not inexorable, nor conceives implacable Anger; nor doth He send Afflictions which we cannot bear, but in the midst of Chastisements remembers Mercy, and according to the Measure of the Grief, mingles the Comforts of his Spirit, which if we have neither Death, nor Pains more terrible than Death, can deject a pious Mind, but if we want, the least of Evils is sufficient to overthrow us; and besides, that these temporal

L. 3. de Anima.

\* Erasmus  
1. 24. Epist.  
15. Johan.  
Rotzemo.



temporal Evils, are compensated here with a plentiful Solace of his Holy Spirit; in the World to come they are rewarded with everlasting Joys.

## XXIII.

But I have one thing more to add, which is, that we cannot have the Confidence to commend our selves thus to God's Providence, if we do not follow him in Obedience to his Commands. And therefore that Advice of the Philosopher is

excellent, τὴν πηλὴν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἐν  
Plutarch, αὐτοῖς ἔσται ἡμῶν, ἐκκαθαίρουμεν, Let  
Περὶ εὐδαι- us purge and cleanse the Fountain  
μονίας. of Tranquility, that is in our  
selves. The Spring of Peace and Contentment

is within, and therefore we had need look that it be clear and undefiled; we cannot derive our Satisfaction, as you have often been told, from Riches, or Greatness of Birth, or Height of Power, or Eloquence of Speech, or any Thing of this Nature: After all our Trials, nothing will yield such a Calm and Serenity, ὅσῳ ψυχὴ καὶ ἀρεῖται, &c. as a Soul pure and free from all evil Actions and Counsels, and a Genius or Disposition of Mind (which is the Fountain of Life) that is settled and uncorrupted: All the good Actions which flow from thence have a chearful and divinely inspired Energy or Force in them, and they breed in a Man a certain Greatness and Height of Mind, and leave a more sweet and durable Remembrance, than that

that Hope which *Pindar* called the Support and Comfort of old Age.

Shall we think, as *Carneades* was wont to say, that when the Branches of sweet Wood keep their Fragrancy, even after they are cut from the Tree, the worthy Actions of a Man of Understanding should not leave in him, continually, a grateful and fresh Remembrance behind them, with which he may entertain himself with great Pleasure and Contentment? Experience tells us, they do not perish nor decay neither, but live still, and look back upon us with a chearful Aspect, from whence such Joy springs and flourishes, that makes a Man despise those that bewail and reproach our present Life, as if it were *ἡγεμονία κακῶν*, the Region of Evils and Mischiefs, a Place designed only for the Banishment of poor Souls from their heavenly Country. Some Philosophers railed upon it in this Manner, but if we do well we shall find it otherwise, we shall begin to be happy here, nay, keep a perpetual Holy-day, by still doing well, or remembering all the Good we have done. So *Diogenes* told a Stranger at *Lacedamon* (for which Saying he is much cryed up by the Ancients) when he saw him very busy in making himself fine, and trimming up his Body for a Festival, *Dost not thou understand that a good Man esteems every Day to be a Festival?* Be wise and good and thou wilt find it so, and a very splendid one too, for this World is a most holy and divine Temple, into which a Man is brought at his Birth, to be a Spectator, not of Statues and  
 only Images,

Images, made with Hands and that have no Life nor Motion, but of such as the divine Mind hath made the Copies of more excellent Things, and which have Life and Motion in them : The Sun, Moon and Stars, I mean, the ever running Rivers, the Earth that sends forth Nourishment for Plants and living Creatures, and the Life of good Men, being that which accomplishes and perfects them for admission to these sacred Solemnities and Spectacles, it must needs be full of Tranquility and Joy ; and is not this far better than the vulgar Pleasure, who long for such and such an Holy-day, that they may enjoy *ὀνιτὸν γέλωτα*, a bought Laughter, for which they pay a Price to the Players, or Dancers, or Musicians, whom they hire to entertain them ? Let us sit then Spectators in this great Temple of God in a decent manner, for no Man mourns and laments on an Holy-day ; it is unseemly to be sad when he is admitted to any Solemnity ; and shall we shame and disgrace the perpetual Festival which God himself hath prepared for us, by Heaviness of Mind, by sad Thoughts and laborious Cares ? Let us not be so rude as to hear the Pipe and Singing of Birds, and behold the little Tricks of other Creatures with Pleasure, abhorring all that is dismal and ungrateful to our Senses, and yet seeing our own Life void of all Mirth, sad, doleful, oppressed with unpleasant Passions, Actions and Thoughts, without any End ; to seek no Remedy for it, nor accept of the Assistance of those who offer it by their Counsels ; let us listen to their pleasant Lessons, who



who would persuade us and teach us how to ease our selves, and tune our Hearts to Joy and Gladness : And all Instructions will do no good without this, to do vertuously, and so with Hearts full of Love to God, and of delightful Reflections upon his Love to us, and our pious Gratitude to him, and of most delicious Hope in him for his everlasting Love and Favour, we may sit Spectators of his Works here below, till he translate us to an higher Place, where we may take a better View of his magnificent Greatness, and most bounteous Goodness to all his Creatures.



## P R A Y E R XIII.

**I** Prostrate my self, O Almighty Lord, and Ruler of all Things, in the most humble Acknowledgment of my Obligations to Thee, and the most hearty Submission of all that I can have, unto thy Divine Wisdom, of whose Care and good Providence I have such rational Belief, and have had such long Experience : I owe all the Comforts of this present Life to thy Bounty, and whatsoever Hopes I have, either here or in the future State, they depend upon the same Goodness, and upon thy gracious Promises, thy Power, Faithfulness and Truth. I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast manifested thy Will, and declared thy most merciful Intentions of Grace towards us, in such precious Promises, which as they excite my Love  
to

to Thee, so they move me to trust intirely in Thee, to commit my self absolutely to Thee, and heartily to serve and obey Thee.

Accordingly here I renew that Dedication which I have frequently made of my whole self to Thee, and chuse to be governed and ordered by thy Will, rather than mine own; hoping in thine infinite Mercies, relying on Thee for what thou judgest to be convenient for me, and conducing to my Welfare, resolving my Desires into thy better Will, and stedfastly purposing to rest contented and satisfied with whatsoever Thou art pleased to appoint for my Portion, and believing that Thou disposest all things for our Good and Happiness.

Bestow upon me, O blessed Lord, such a Measure of thy holy Spirit, as is needful for me, that may preserve in my Mind these good Thoughts and holy Inclinations, and excite in me still more pious Affections, and assist all my Endeavours to be so wise and so good, as Thou wouldst have me. Help me rightly to employ my precious Time, prudently to chuse my Society; to do all Things with good Advice; to be constant to well-settled Resolutions; to provide and arm my self for all Changes; and foreseeing what may come, to dispose my self to receive it, with an humble, equal, quiet and undisturbed Spirit; and that I may never be surprised nor disordered, help me in the Day of Prosperity to remember Affliction, and in the Day of Adversity to solace my self with the Remembrance of thy past Favours, and with the Hopes of thy future Mercies.

Purge

# S E R M O N XIII. 385

Purge my Mind and Heart from all false Opinions, and naughty Affections, and enable me to preserve my Heart so pure, sincere and undefiled, that from a Conscience of well doing I may feel a perpetual Satisfaction springing up to refresh me in all Conditions of Life. Indue me, good Lord, with such a prudent, sober, sweet, condescending and gracious Temper, and disposition of Mind, that I may be acceptable to thee, inoffensive to others, and comfortably enjoy my self; free me from the Trouble of a contentious or envious Spirit; help me to bridle my Tongue, and to keep it from Evil, and my Lips from speaking Guile; and whatsoever the Opinions or Censures of others be concerning me, bless me with the Comforts of an innocent Mind and an upright Heart; and enable me to rejoice always in the Testimony of a good Conscience, to mind my own proper Business, and in all Simplicity and Plainness of Heart to order my self by a sound and unprejudiced Reason, and not by the customs and uncertain Fashions of this present World.

Blessed be thy infinite Goodness, that I see the Way to be happy, and am acquainted with the Paths of Pleasantness and Peace; blessed be thy Goodness that I have such constant good Admonitions, wise Counsels, and faithful Advices, and enjoy so many Assistances of my Friends, Lovers and Acquaintance, to guide, refresh, and solace me in my Passage thro' all the Dangers and Troubles of this Life: Good Lord affect my Heart with thy wondrous Love, and make me truly thankful for all these Blessings; enable me also to make the best Use and Advantage of them, and setting before me the Examples of all those who thro' Faith and Pa-  
C c
tience



*tience have inherited thy Promise, to follow them chearfully und courageously till I become my self an Example of true Piety and generous Virtue.*

*Fix and establisth in my Mind all good Principles and religious Reasons, root them so deeply in my Heart by serious and constant Meditation on them, that I may find their friendly Power and Strength to assist, support and comfort me on all Occasions; and especially fix my Mind in an immoveable Resolution to cleave to thee, and unite it self with thee; never suffer my Will to incline to divide it self from thine, but enable me always readily and heartily to say, whatsoever comes, it is the Lord let him do what seemeth good in his Sight, that maintaining an uninterrupted Friendship with thee, in this World, and never contradicting or opposing thy wise Appointments, I may have the Consolations of thy holy Spirit filling my Heart at all Times, and may live in a delightful Hope, to see all the Troubles of this World, end in everlasting Repose and Joys, thro' thy Son our Saviour Christ Jesus; by whom all Honour, Glory, Praise and Thanksgiving, be rendered by me, and by all Mankind, and by all the Host of Heaven, to thee, O Father Almighty, both now and eternally.*





# SERMON XIV.



HEB. XIII. 5.

*Be content with such Things as ye have :--*



HAVING dispatched those things which I propounded in the Beginning of these Discourses, there is nothing now remaining to be done, but only to make some Improvement of what hath been said, which I cannot neglect, because this is a Doctrine of so great Importance.

And there are but three Things that I shall recommend to your Consideration at this Time.

## I.

The First is, that there is no Man, but may have him enough, if he please to use it, to attend the Affairs of his immortal Soul. I make the Inference clear to you thus; if our Souls be not our chief Care, and the informing them with the Knowledge of God and of his Son do not imploy our best Thoughts, the Reason must be, if it be worth any thing, because something else is more excellent, and deserves

## 388      S E R M O N    XIV.

more Regard, or something else is more necessary and cannot, without so much Time as will leave none for the Concernments of our Souls, be provided and supplied. But neither of these Reasons can be pretended, and therefore our Souls and their Affairs, do challenge our best, most serious, and constant Thoughts.

That nothing else is more excellent and more to be regarded, is so plain, that it doth not need any Pains of mine to demonstrate, if it lay in my Way at this present to discourse of it.

And that Nothing is of such Necessity, that it must be provided for at the Cost and Charge of our Souls (leaving no considerable Leisure to look after their Good) doth unavoidably follow from the Doctrine that I have all this while explained and proved to you, *viz.* That we may well be contented (without so much Care and Trouble as we put ourselves unto) in our present Estate, whatever it be; for God, I have shown you, hath provided for all Creatures enough, and much more for Man who is the best of them: And a few Things I have likewise shown, will give us enough, and those few Things are not so hard to be obtained, but we may soon have them; and having them, be able to think ourselves rich enough.

The clear Consequence of which is, that there will be no Excuse for Mens gross want of Care about their Souls; they will never be able to make any handsome Apology for their Ignorance of the Gospel; for their not reading and meditating on the Word of God; for their Unbelief  
and



# S E R M O N XIV. 389

and not living according to the Commands of Christ : What will a Man say in his own Behalf, to wipe off the Blame of not praying continually; of not recounting the Mercies and Favours of God to him; and not studying and imitating the Example of our Lord Jesus, in his heavenly Mindedness, Dependance on God, Contempt of Riches, Sobriety, Mercifulness, Meekness, and all other Virtues, which will contribute, I have shewn you, so much to his Satisfaction; and not only please God but himself too? Will he say that he knew none of these Things? That he cannot, because they are revealed: Will he say that he could not understand them? That's false, for they are clearly revealed, and continually inculcated in our Sermons and Discourses to you: Will he say that he had no Time to consider of the Things that were pressed upon him; nor could find so much Leisure as to pray seriously to God to take an Account of himself, to examine his Heart and Life, to reckon up the Benefits he hath received, &c. This is as unjust a Pretence as either of the former; for I have demonstrated that you may be contented with less of the Things of this Life, the inordinate Desire and Love of which, drowns Mens Souls in Perdition and Destruction. You have Leisure for unnecessary Things, and therefore cannot want it for this one thing needful, which is the learning of God's Will, and the doing of it. You can labour for more than you really want of the Goods of this present World; and therefore what hinders you, but only an unprofitable Labour, from

C c 3

seeking

seeking after that which you most want, the Knowledge of God, and everlasting Salvation? You can have so much Faith, or rather Infidelity, as to toil and sweat for those Things which God never promised you; why will you not have so much Faith, as to take Pains for those Things which he will certainly give you? Will it hinder you in all your other Labours, so that you shall not be able to provide your selves Necessaries? How justly then might the *Israelites* have excused themselves with this Pretence, when God bid them go three Times in a Year to *Jerusalem*, (which was many Miles from some of their Dwellings) and there spend seven Days at the Passover, as many at the Feast of Tabernacles, and one Day at the Feast of Weeks? Might not they have said, it will undo us to lose seven Days Work together, besides the Time that must be spent in going from our own Houses to the House of God, and returning back again? Who can live if he be constantly put to such great Charges, together with his Time of offering so many Sacrifices; and yet you see that pious People, tho' poor and low in the World, did not plead this at all, but *Joseph* and *Mary* (who were Persons of a mean Condition, it appears by their Oblation) went every Year to the Feast of the Passover, *Luke 2. 41.* tho' they lived in *Gahlee*, which was the remotest Part of the Country from the holy City, and did he suffer any to fare the worse for this? Did he not promise them that he would suppress the Desires of their Enemies after their Land, when all the Men  
were

# S E R M O N XIV. 391

were gone up to worship at the Temple? And did he not promise to prosper their Labours, and bless them in the Increase of their Cattle and Corn, and all other Things? Why should we then, who are not put to such Cost, Trouble, and Expence of Time, grudge to study the Will of God, to meditate on his Promises, and pray to him for his Grace and all other Blessings; when God requires no such long Journey to be undertaken that we may go to Heaven, when he dwells among us every where, and is present in every Place to bless our pious Endeavours to please him? What should hinder us, what should discourage us, what should retard these holy Labours? Have we Time for every Thing, but only to seek how we may be happy? Is there Room to entertain all manner of Objects, but only God who made them all? Is the greatest Good the only thing that must be excluded out of our Thoughts, and out of our Affections? What Madness is this which possesses Mankind, that they should sacrifice their whole Time merely to Ambition, or to the acquiring such lazy Possessions, that they are a vast deal more than needs, or the satisfying extravagant Desires of Pleasure, which in Conclusion they find they had better been without, and repent of their Bargain?

And yet this is the Condition of so many Souls, that it cannot but move ones Heart to condole the lamentable Loss of such Numbers; for tho' some are so poor, that they are tempted by Hunger to barter away their precious Time, as *Esau*



did his Birthright, for Bread and Broth; yet the greatest Part of Men as an excellent Poet of our own expresses it) make such Bargains as *Thamar* did with *Judah*, instead of a Kid, the necessary Provision of humane Life, they are content to part with this Birthright, their precious Time, for Rings and Bracelets, the mere Ornaments of Life; and the other need not be such Slaves, as not to be at Liberty to think of God, even when they think how to live. There are none so poor but they will find Time now and then, for some Sport and Recreation or other; and cannot they pray as heartily to God, as they importune and beg Relief of their rich Neighbours? Cannot they be truly thankful to God, and to others, when they receive an Alms? Cannot they be just when they desire Mercy? Doth not their very Condition teach them Temperance and Humility? Are not their Hearts set towards Heaven and eternal Possessions with our Saviour, by being deprived of Riches and Revenues on Earth? Is it not as easy to look up to the Father of Mercies, as to cast their Eyes on a charitable Person? May not their Sins be bewailed with as much Ease, as their miserable Condition? And I beseech you, what serve such Days of Grace as this for? Have you no Time at this present to consider the State of your Souls, or to think of what we say unto you? Cannot you imploy this Time, which is set apart for that Purpose, in taking their Condition to Heart, and casting in your serious Thoughts how to make them better? Must the World and your Pleasures ingross this Season like-

likewise to themselves? What Necessity can you shew for that?

Is the Countryman able to give any Reason, why, when he goes from these holy Assemblies, where he meets with God and our Saviour, he must needs fall immediately into a Discourse about his Cattle, or his Ground, or the Price of Corn, or any thing of that Nature? Cannot he as well think a while how to get to Heaven, and how to encrease in the Knowledge and Love of God, and to bring himself to a Resolution never to neglect any Part of his Service? And why must others presently divert their Thoughts to their Shops, and to their Trades; or to the News of the Town; or to the Designs they have laid the next Day for their Pleasures and delightful Entertainments? Is it not sufficient to enjoy them in their proper Season, but we must rob God and our Souls, to possess our Minds with unnecessary Thoughts about them? Why cannot we as well endeavour to digest some wholesome Counsel which hath been given us? Why cannot we spend a little of the Remainder of this Day to settle a pious Resolution, which we have conceived? Is it such a mighty Difficulty to fall upon our Knees, when we come at home, or in the Conclusion of this Day, and beseech God to imprint in our Minds all good Instructions, and assist us with his Grace to perform our Christian Duties, in the Places and Relation in which he hath set us? Is it such a severe Labour, that we should be weary of it, to meditate how many Ways God hath blessed  
us,

us, how many Mercies of several Sorts, he hath bestowed upon us, what Hopes we have by the Gospel of good Things, that exceed all our Thoughts in everlasting Life? There is no Question to be made of it, but you have such an Opportunity at this present, that if you would improve it well, you would find more Time every Day, to do your Souls Justice. You would say, O my Soul, why dost thou forget thy self? One thing is needful, let us not trouble our selves so much about these unnecessary Things. O let us go to God, and seek his Favour and Blessing; let us hear what he says to us in holy Word: Did not the Servants of God heretofore rejoice in this, more than in thousands of Gold and Silver? Let us share with them in this Joy, who have greater Treasures of Wisdom and knowledge opened unto us in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus: Let us not neglect such great Salvation; for if they escaped not who heard not him that spake on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven. *Heb. x. 25.*

We do not wish you to be idle, when we give you this Advice, for that's not good for your Souls no more than for your Bodies; nor do we bid you to be improvident, to have no Forecast, or not to make Use of an Opportunity for the increasing your Estates, for this would be to take from Men all Prudence: All that God requires of you is, that you would not so attend to these earthly Things, as to let slip the Opportunities you have for the good of your Souls; that you would



would not be so laborious for the outward Man, as to be idle in working out your Salvation; he that is so, and thinks himself sufficiently saved from blame, because he hath himself and Family to make provision for, will find one Day that he might have been contented with less Riches, and have minded also the Affairs of his Soul, and had never the less of these worldly Goods. This if you did believe (and it is a certain Truth) it would make you at present more mindful of Heaven; and save you the Labour hereafter of bewailing unprofitably the Loss of such an inestimable Happiness. May not even a labouring Man before he go forth to his Work in the Morning adress himself to God, and say,

*Lord I am thine, thou hast made me, and hitherto maintained me: I have received such and such Mercies from thee; I am in Health, and have the Use of my Limbs, and am able to work; blessed be thy Name I never wanted Food since I came into this World; I love thee, O Lord, with all my Heart, I will ever love thee and do thy Will; I am resolv'd to depend upon thee, and put my Trust in thee for ever; I will keep thy Commandments with my whole Heart, and esteem thy precious Promises more than all Riches; bless me I beseech thee, and be with me all this Day; preserve me from Murmuring and Envy; and make me more thankful for all thy Blessings, and bring me by patient Continuance in well doing to eternal Life.*

May he not, I say, pour out his Heart in these or the like Desires to God? What Hindrance

drance will this be to him? Nay, if he have any Faith, God will the more blefs and prosper him. And may he not, if he can read, take a good Book along with him, and when he rests and refreshes himself, read a little, and think of it afterward with himself? Or may he not meditate on the Sermon he hears to day, and pray to God fervently that he may have Grace to practise those holy Truths which have been made known to him?

What then may not they do, who have more Riches, and are Masters of more Time and better Opportunities? Is there any need that they should be still coveting and stretching their Designs after more abundance? To what Purpose is it that they aspire after such and such Dignities? May they not sit down and be happy, tho' they never ascend to that Heighth of Honour? Perhaps they fancy that if they had but such Additions to their Riches and Greatness as they desire, then they should find more Leisure to attend to their Souls, and certainly improve it. Alas! this is a mere Delusion like all the rest; for they that have gotten up to the very highest Step upon Fortune's Ladder, the great Emperors, I mean, of the World, who had ill Men at their command, did not find their Thoughts advanced nearer Heaven by this Means; after they had cloyed themselves with all the Variety of Delights, which their large Dominions could furnish their Desires withal, still they could find no Appetite after diviner Enjoyments, their Thoughts run still the same Way, infomuch  
that

that when they had surfeited on the greater Pleasures of this World, rather than look higher, they betook themselves for a Cure to the most contemptible Divertisements, and the meanest Recreations of the Vulgar, nay, of little Children; One of them (as a rare Person of our own Nation, hath expressed better than I can do) who stiled himself *Lord and God of the whole Earth*, could not tell how to pass his Day pleasantly, without spending two or three Hours in catching Flies and killing them with his Bodkin, a most worthy Employment for an earthly God: One of his Predecessors (*Nero*) could divert himself with no Pastime more agreeable than to run about the Streets all Night, in a Disguise, abusing all he met withal, sometimes beating them, and sometimes being beaten by them; this was one of his imperial nocturnal Pleasures, and his chiefest in the Day, was to sing and play upon a Fiddle in the Habit of a Minstrel, on a publick Stage, being prouder of the Garlands given to his Divine Voice (as his Flatterers called it) in those goodly Prizes, than his Forefathers were of their Triumphs over Nations. *Augustus* himself the most fortunate of all Mankind, and a Person endowed with many excellent Gifts of Nature, was so hard put to it for want of Recreations, as to be found playing at Nuts and bounding-Stones with little Boys, whose Company he took delight in, for their Prating and Wantonness.

Cowl. Ess.  
p. 122.



All which I mention to shew how Men are like to deceive themselves, who imagine that when they are greater, they shall be more vacant than they are now for their spiritual Affairs; they will still in all Probability find themselves something else to do, if they be not at Leisure now; and rather than do as they should, they will play the Fool, and pass their Time in idle and childish Employments: Oh! how terribly will this witness against them, when then they shall appear before the great Lord and Judge of all! Take occasion, I beseech you, from thence to think how dreadful the Day of Christ will be, it will be a Day of great Conviction and Amazing Reproof; you will see then, there was no Reason that the Knowledge of our Lord should be so neglected; and the saving Truths of this heavenly Book should be left only to Men of Learning, or of great Leisure; and that the Son of God did not come into the World, to put us into an impossible Way to Heaven; you had better be convinced of it now, and apply yourselves to the knowing and doing of his Will, than stay till that day of Terror come.

And that you may be the more awakened and engaged to Mind what hath been said; let me proceed to the second Inference from this Doctrine of Contentment,

## II.

which may serve highly to recommend to us the Excellency of the Christian Religion. There is nothing so worthy of your Study and Pains; no  
Truths

Truths so satisfying to your Souls, as those herein contained ; it shows you the ready Way to that Contentment of Heart (as you have formerly been told) which is the only thing you aim at in seeking after Riches, Honours, or any Pleasures which are most tempting and inviting to your Appetites ; and therefore you have very great Encouragement to apply your selves to the Understanding and Practice of it, because hereby you shall arrive at that with the saving of your Souls and enough for your Bodies too, which now you labour for uncertainly, with the Loss of your Souls, and the great Toil and Misery of the outward Man. Three Arguments are contained in this that I have said ; we shall have that which Men vainly seek after elsewhere, that is, Contentment ; we shall save our Souls which are in Danger to be lost ; and we shall provide certainly for our Bodies without so much toilsome Labour : O ! the Goodness of God that makes such good Provision for Men, if they could but see it ! They would lose their Souls to satisfy their Bodies ; God would have them save their Souls, and better secure the Comforts of the Body also. They seek for Contentment with a great deal of Labour, and are still Strangers to it ; he would give it with less Labour, so that they should never want it ; for he bids us, as you have often heard, *be content with what we have*, and he hath said, he will *never leave us nor forsake us* ; now he is not so unwise or unjust, as to bid us do that which he hath left us no Means to accomplish : No, this Religion, as I have shewn you, teaches

teaches the most effectual, the most short and easy Way of coming at this Blessing of Contentment.

Consider but how insufficient all other Ways are, besides this, and it will the more magnify Christian Religion in your Eyes.

*First*, It doth not grow naturally within us, for we have a Fancy, and a Longing naturally for every thing we see.

*Secondly*, It is not to be found in the Enjoyment of worldly Goods, as I have demonstrated, for they rather enlarge our Desires and make us long for more. Nor,

*Thirdly*, Will bare Reason teach Men a Perfection in this Art; for 'till the Christian Religion came into the World, this was a great Part of Mens Dissatisfaction, that some Things of greatest Moment to make us contented, were so uncertainly and obscurely known, and so diversly disputed about, as it was hard to come to any settled Resolution. Oh! how much ought we to think our selves bound to God, for this Discovery of himself to us in the Gospel! which shows so clearly the Goodness, and the gracious Nature of God, as never any other Religion did, because it tells us that God hath so loved us, as to give his own Son to us: And therefore, *1<sup>st</sup>*, Though mere Reason might be tempted to look on God, as one so highly above us, that he would not vouchsafe to concern himself in our petty Affairs; there is no Suspicion of this can enter, if we understand the Christian Religion, because he is pleased to come and dwell  
among



# S E R M O N XIV. 401

among us, and manifest himself in our Flesh; some of the learnedest of the Heathens imagined that God minded not particular Things, as too much below him; but now that the Fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, we are sure he cannot but mind us and take care of us, as the Husband cherishes his Wife, and the Soul loves the Body. And (2dly,) mere Reason might be tempted to conceive of God according to our own Temper and Disposition, and because we are apt, when we can, to carry Things by strong Power, and mere Will, to imagine that he doth so too; but there is no Place for such Thoughts in Christian Religion, which teaches that all Things are done here in the World, not only by the Will of God, but by his Wisdom and Love. By some of the Heathens their Gods were lookt upon but as *superbi Domini, imperious Lords*, that would have their Will; and therefore must be submitted unto, because Men could not help it, being unable to resist those who were so much their Superiours; but we are taught to look upon the Lord of all, as a Father that governs his Household with such excellent Wisdom and Sweetness, that we should chuse to submit unto him, because we cannot do so well, much less better, if we had more Power in our Hands.

Mere Reason also (3dly,) may tell us that it is possible to work some good to our selves out of every thing; but Christianity instructs us to think that God designs some Good to us, and his Spirit shall assist us to effect it. And (4thly,)

Contentedness of Spirit, which mere Reason praises and commands as a desirable Good, Christian Religion commands, and makes a Duty, and so puts us more strongly upon the Pursuit of it. And (*5thly,*) that eternal Life which Men had some faint Hope of, our Lord hath now assured us he will bestow upon his Disciples, and bids them not doubt at all of it. And who could have thought of such Things as he hath told us shall be the Portion of the Faithful? His Promises exceed all that entred into Mens Minds to conceive, the quickest sighted Men could see no Probability of them, but we owe them to mere Revelation; and there Promises concerning both Lives, that which now is, and that which is to come: What God saith to the *Levites*, *Deut. 17. 2.* may be applied to every Christian, who is made a Priest unto God, *the Lord is their Inheritance*; he is their Portion, and will provide for them. *Maimonides* himself was of Opinion, that these Words might be extended to every Man that hath the Fear of God in him; but no Jew could have any such Assurance of God's fatherly Care as we Christians have, for whom he hath done greater Things, having invested us in such an Inheritance as will not let us doubt of his Willingness to bestow upon us lesser Things. And therefore (*Lastly,*) the Excellence of this Religion appears in this, that it teaches us, as I said, by being contented and saving our Souls, to secure the Interest of the Body too, and provide it with all things needful for it. *Celsus* indeed jeared at those Words  
of

of our Saviour, in which he taught his Disciples, not to take Care what they should eat, or what they should drink, no more than the Crows or Pigeons do; nor what they should put on, no more than the Lillies are solicitous about their Cloathing. But it's plain, that being to go and preach the Gospel, they could not discharge that Duty in strange Countries unless they were without Care, and relyed on his Word that he would make Provision for them. And for what belongs to us in those Words, *Origen* hath well answered that cavilling Philosopher, that our Saviour means we should be contented with a little, even as those Creatures are, and that we should not toil over much, no more than they do; and that we should believe his Providence, which takes care of them, will not fail to take care of a Christian, *ἐ μόνον τῆς τῆς ἀναγκαιῶν φροντισῶν*, if so be he do but take care about those things which are most necessary.

## III.

Now let us from hence proceed to consider, how much more easy the Lesson of Self-denial is to learn, than Men make it, tho' it be accounted the hardest thing in our Religion; God hath provided so many Means of our Contentment, that it is no Adventure to call it easy, if we will not go our own laborious and tedious Way to attain it. And if that be easy, then Self-denial cannot be so difficult as it is deemed, because that Duty is contained within this of Contentment.



To deny our selves is to part with any thing that belongs to us, even Life it self, rather than not follow Christ, and do as he hath commanded us. Now he that hath already stilled and quieted all his Desires, so that they are not inordinately and passionately set upon any thing, will soon perform this Duty. His Desires when they ask any thing will easily take a Denial, because he hath something else to satisfy them: For (1<sup>st</sup>,) he only denies to himself those things that he hath no absolute need of, such as he may spare, and yet have enough. And (2<sup>dly</sup>,) such as many others have, and yet have not Contentment. And (3<sup>dly</sup>,) such as many others have not, and yet have no Christianity neither; he is no worse than they, who are nothing so good and happy as he. And (4<sup>thly</sup>,) such as perhaps he himself once had not, and yet was not miserable. And (5<sup>thly</sup>,) he only denies himself, that he may be God's, and at his finding. Or (Lastly,) if he must in the most proper Sense deny himself, that is, his Life, yet then he can do it, because by parting with that one thing, he shall stand in need of nothing any more, but have all that Heart can desire.

And the Truth is, during our Stay in this Life, when we submit our Wills wholly to God's, all Things go better with us, than if we keep them in our own Hands: So the Story of the old Hermit, intended to teach us, who used to pray very earnestly now for Rain to fall on his Garden, and then for fair Weather to follow that Rain, and yet it did not prosper; where-

as the Gardens of his Neighbours were in a thriving Condition; the Reason of which whilst he was wondring at, one of his Brethren said thus to him, Thou Fool, dost thou think that thou art wiser than God? If we can be quiet and do his Will, he will always give us that which is best for us.

It was a very foolish Saying of one, who being ask'd, who were the most happy Men in this World, made Answer, either Kings or Fools, who live, both of them, without Anxiety; for the former, said he, (adding his Reasons) can have what they will, and the other are not sensible of any Danger or Misery, but all things are alike to them. There are far happier Men than either of these, who tho' they be no Fools, utterly insensible of Want, Disgrace, or the like; nor no Kings neither, unless it be in their Command over their own Affections; yet for all that, are as well pleased, as if they had their Wills in every thing, because they are content to submit to God, and resolved to satisfy themselves in his Pleasure. He is in a good Condition, who doth not believe he is miserable, as well as he that doth not feel, nor hath any Sense of Misery; for every Man is just as he thinks himself to be; and he hath what he will, as well as Kings, who layeth down his Will at the Feet of God, and desires him to please himself, and dispose of him as seemeth best to his unerring Wisdom.

And if it be easy, nay satisfactory, to deny our selves upon this Account, even in our lawful

Enjoyments, much more easy must it be to reject any Desires after unlawful and forbidden Things. He that to please our Saviour can part with things otherwise good, will not grudge, one would think, to forbear to displease him, by doing any thing that is always bad: What great Difficulty can there be in abstaining from lying, cozening, and unjust Dealing? When Men can keep themselves from coveting, (as you shall hear another Time) why should it be thought so hard to keep from Fraud and Guile? What should tempt a Man to fall into Riot, Gluttony, Drunkenness and Excess, when he sees one may be contented with a Morsel and Quietness therewith? Or what should move a Man to be proud and haughty, to be full of Wrath, Anger and Fury, when he sees that an humble Condition is most peaceable?

Some of you, I believe, have read or heard, how *Mahomet* the first *Turkish* Emperor, smote off the Head of the fair *Irene* his Concubine with his own Hands, tho' he loved her dearly, and had taken no distaste at her, merely that he might show to his *Bassa's* and *Captains*, how able he was to conquer himself, and subdue his own Affections, which they thought too much engaged to her, even to the Prejudice of his Affairs. And you all know how a greater and better Person than he (as the holy Story tells us, 2 *Sam.* 23. 15, 16.) having a passionate Longing after the Waters by the Gate of *Bethlehem*, which it is like he knew excelled all other in Pleasantness and Goodness (for in that Town he

was



was bred and there he had kept his Father's Sheep) yet when they were brought to him by the Valour of some of his Worthies, bethought himself better and would not drink them, but poured them out as an Offering to the Lord, who had preserved such brave Men that had hazarded their Lives for his Sake. And this Abstinence it is like he exercised, partly to condemn the Irregularity of his Desires in putting the Lives of three such Men in Danger, and partly that it might teach his Army Patience and Constancy in Thirst and Hunger, to which their Warfare would often expose them. A Fact like to which is recorded by *Q. Curtius*, concerning *Alexander* the Great, who in a great Thirst, by which his Army suffered much, having a Cup full of Water presented to him, refused to taste of it, saying, that there was too much for him, and not enough for every body else, for which Cause he would have none at all, but endure as much as the rest. What a World of Mischief had *David* prevented, if he had but in another Instance repressed his Appetite, as he did now, when he saw *Bathsheba* and sent for her, and he thought of killing *Uriah* in so base a manner? And what vile and dirty Actions had *Alexander* avoided, if he had exercised the same Temperance which he did in the Field, within the Walls of his Palace, at his Feasts and Entertainments? At one of which he slew his particular Friend, and at another of which he caused the beautiful City of *Persepolis* to be set on Fire and consumed. It was a thing possible for them sure

at one Time as well as another. And it is possible likewise for every one of us both to gainsay and overcome our Inordinate Desires in all Cases; for if the Law of *Moses* had that Power over *David*, and the mere Law of Nature, or perhaps but political Reason and military Discipline, could lay such Restraints upon others; of what Force do you think the Law of *Christ* and his heavenly Promises to be, if they were laid to Heart and diligently kept in Mind by us? It will enable us, you have seen, to be content ever without Things lawful to be enjoyed, and therefore will much more fortify us against the Desire of things unlawful; by refusing of which you likewise see, in the foregoing Examples, we shall deliver our selves from a great deal of Sin and Misery.

The Counsel which the Heathen Writers were wont to give in this Case was, to habituate our selves in Patience and Contentedness

Enchir.  
cap. 17.      ἀπὸ τῶν μικρῶν, *By beginning with small Things.* As the Oyl or the Wine, saith *Epicætetus*, is spilt upon the Ground; then say to thy self on that little Occasion, τοσούτου πωλεῖται ἀπάθεια, *So much I must pay for Tranquility;* at this Rate Contentment is sold, I must buy my Patience at this Price; πῶς οὐκ ἔστιν πωραγμένη, *For there is nothing to be had gratis, but it will cost something.* And if we find that we have a good Bargain, and that the Thing we have got is of far greater Value than that we lost, we shall not stick to purchase it at a dearer Rate, but be content tho' we must pay more for it. Be  
quiet,

quiet, I mean, tho' we suffer in Things of more Moment than those now named, for the Peace of our Mind is still more precious, and we ought not to grudge to give any thing for it, nor murmur that it costs us so much to learn it.

And if, as *Simplicius* glosses upon that Author, any Man would seriously follow his way of Merchandise, not for a Time, but always, how rich and wealthy would he grow ! What Treasures would he possess at no great Expence ! For he would, as *Diomedes's* Sand, change Brass and Iron for Silver or Gold ; he would purchase the greatest Good of the Mind, with the Loss of little Things without him : And the Case may happen so, that he may keep those also, and the Preparation of his Mind to receive the Loss of them contentedly, may be sufficient.

But when all this is done, we see by the Instances now given, that it is not sufficient, tho' it may do much toward the teaching us to deny our selves : We must make use of other Helps, and render this Duty more easy, by reflecting, as I have said heretofore, upon the innumerable Blessings we still enjoy, tho' in some things we deny our Desires, and especially by considering what Happiness we shall deprive our selves of, by gratifying our intemperate Appetites, and letting them loose beyond their Bounds. Let us think how Christ *Jesus* was promoted to his celestial Glory, who pleased not himself, (*Rom. 15. 3.*) but, as it was written, *the Reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell upon me.* He did



did not think much to deny his own Will to follow God's, nor did he suffer any Loss thereby, (tho' for the present he parted with his Life, and that in a shameful and ignominious Manner) but it turned to his great Gain, as you have often heard; for he humbling himself, tho' he was so divine a Person, being obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross, therefore God highly exalted him, and raised his Name above every Name, that every Knee should bow unto him, and confess him to be the Lord of all, to the Glory of God the Father. *Amen.*



## P R A Y E R XIV.

**I** Adore thee, O Lord, and acknowledge thy great Goodness; in that thou hast indued me with an understanding and immortal Spirit, capable of the noblest Enjoyments, of no less than to have Acquaintance and Society, yea, an happy Friendship with thy self, to be admitted into thy secret Councils, which thou hast revealed in Christ Jesus, and to rejoice with thee for ever, in being Partaker of thy blessed Nature and Likeness. O God, how much ought I to rejoice at present, in this Dignity to which thou hast preferred me, tho' I were in want of all other Things? And therefore how much more ought I to rejoice, that Thou hast made so bountiful a Provision for my Body, of the Things of this Life; and thereby given  
me

me greater Leisure to attend to the enriching of this immortal Spirit with the most excellent Goods, the choicest Treasures of Wisdom, Vertue and Piety? Be thy holy Name for ever praised and acknowledged by me, which hath taken such Care of Me, and instructed me by the Religion of Christ Jesus, how to be happy, both here and eternally. I thank thee, O Lord, that I see the Way how to do my Soul good, without hurting my Body; yea, that Thou hast made my Care to provide for my everlasting Welfare, to be a certain Means to secure thy Blessing upon me for the Things of this present Time. O how admirable is thy Goodness which would not have me to be a little but very happy! How admirable is thy Goodness, which designs such great, such long Possessions for me, as surpass all that Mankind thought of, or desired! We ask good Things for this World, and thou givest us eternal Bliss; we seek the fading Enjoyments of a frail Body, and thou hast sent us the lasting Felicity of an immortal Soul. We are too prone to forget our main Concernments in endless Life, and thou remembrest us of them, to our exceeding Advantage also other Ways.

I thank Thee again, as well as I am able, O God, the Father of my Spirit, and beseech Thee to turn my Mind, in Consideration of thy Goodness, from all inordinate Cares about unnecessary Things, to this one thing needful, the saving of my Soul. Help me to employ the happy Leisure thou givest me, to the settling my self in eternal Repose: Bless my Endeavours to grow in the  
Know-

*Knowledge of Thee: Lift up my Heart in most ardent Desires, after a fuller Participation of Thee: Satisfy me with thy Love and thy divine Likeness, that I may be able not only contentedly to enjoy what thou hast blessed me withal, but cheerfully to deny any thing for thy sake, and make all that I have a Sacrifice to thy Service: Preserve me especially from being transported at any time, beyond the Bounds of Piety, Righteousness, Moderation, or Decency, by the Violence of any Appetite whatsoever: And enable me, in the Consideration of what I have, and what I hope for, to keep close to thy Will, and to contain my self within the Limits which thou hast prescribed me, on whom all my present Possessions and future Hopes depend entirely.*

*Endue me, I beseech Thee, with so much Wisdom and Goodness, that I may profit by the smallest Occasions, and exercise my self by every thing that befalls me, to such patient Endurance, and humble Resignation, that I may attain at last a perfect Peace and Quietness of Spirit, and feeling daily the Comfort and Satisfaction of that Happiness, nothing may tempt me out of it, but all things may make an Addition to it, by my stedfast and unmoveable Adherence to thy holy Will, and Submission to thy good Providence.*

*Turn my Eyes still unto Jesus, and fix my Mind and Heart in delightful Contemplations of him, and devout Affections to him, that being filled with his Spirit, I may partake with him his Joys and Consolations, and have Hopes by  
quitting*



# S E R M O N XV. 413

quitting my own Desires at present, to obtain that glorious Good which exceeds all that Heart can desire; when he shall come again to perfect the Satisfaction of all those that love and wait for his blessed Appearing. Amen.



# S E R M O N XV.



H E B. XIII. 5.

---Be content with such Things as ye have:---



S I begun, so I shall end these Discourses, by desiring you to read again those Words, in Heb. 13. 5. *Be content with such Things as you have.* Which Exhortation, if you will faithfully receive, you will easily see, which is the fourth Thing I would advise you of, from what hath been said.

## IV.

The Reasonableness of that Command, *Thou shalt not covet*, and of those Words of our Saviour, *Luke 13. 15. Take heed and beware of Covetousness*; and of the Admonition just before my Text, *Let your Conversation be without Covetousness.*

*vetousness.* For these Words, *be content with Things present,* do not only condemn all Injustice, all violent, unconscionable and fraudulent Dealing, in acquiring to ourselves that which is another Man's; but also all inordinate Desire either of his House, or his Farm, or his Bargain, or his Office, or his Honour, or any such like thing which is in his Possession. We need not cast such a greedy Eye upon that which is our Neighbour's, if he would but study and embrace the Religion of *Jesus Christ*. We may rest satisfied, I have proved, with what we have, nay, rejoice in it, without such an hungry Appetite after which is none of ours.

But you will say, What Desires and Designs are inordinate? When do we stretch them so far, as to make them inconsistent with Contentment? All Desires are not unlawful; we may wish to have more, for else how should we seek for more, which Religion doth not forbid? Let us understand therefore what is irregular and undue.

To this I shall give some Satisfaction, it being too much out of the Way to insist long upon it. And first I suppose,

1. It will be granted by all, that when a Man sets his Heart upon getting of Riches, and charges himself with that Care more than with being eternally happy, he is gone beyond all reasonable Bounds. This is so dangerous an Evil, that it is the Love of the World which, *St. James* saith, is inconsistent with the Love and Friendship of God. IV. 4. This is properly that Hardness of Heart

Heart spoken of in Scripture, which will let a Man have no Sense or Feeling of any thing, tho' never so excellent, but what makes for his worldly Interest. And it was the Mother of that vile Hypocrisy which reigned in the Pharisees, who had no regard to that part of Religion, which consisted in doing Good to others, as they desired God should do to them.

2. I suppose it will be as readily granted, that it is an inordinate Desire which makes a Man restless and impatient for its Accomplishment, even to the Disturbance of his Neighbour: If one have no Mind, for Instance, to part with that which we long for (his Land, suppose, or House, or any thing else, which he loves and prizes as much as we can do) it is an irregular Appetite not to be quiet without it; tho' we be willing to give him the true Value for it. To have a Desire of it, is no Fault, if the Owner be willing to part with it; but when we know he is not willing, still to continue the vehement Desire, is blameable and dangerous, for it tends to that which is most mischievous: Such was the Desire of *Abab*, the Picture of filthy Covetousness, who still gaped after *Naboth's* Vineyard; when one would think, he had stopt his Mouth by telling him, it was the Inheritance of his Father, which he had a Resolution to keep, as long as he could, in his Family.

3. And is not that, think you, an inordinate Desire, which breaks a Man's own Peace, and puts his Spirit out of Order, and disturbs his Duty? When a Man's thoughts are so set upon what he would



would have, that he cannot pray, nor hear the Word of God, nor read a good Book, but still this comes into his Mind, and calls him away from his better Business, he cannot be excused from the Guilt of Covetousness. For this was *Abab's* Case also, who could not eat, nor sleep, for longing after *Naboth's* Vineyard.

4. When a Man so desires also another Man's Goods, that he conceives a Displeasure against the Person who will not satisfy his Desire, we know not how to quit him from Blame : It is so sensible an Irregularity, that we cannot but condemn the Displeasure he hath within himself at his own Condition, because it is not so good as that of other Mens.

5. And still it is a more palpable Degree of Baseness, when a young Man's Desires are so eager, that they make him not care what Courses he takes to satisfy them : As *Abab* you know most unworthily consented to his Wife *Jezabel* to accuse *Naboth* unjustly, that he might get his Vineyard. And tho' a Man do not actually proceed to do bad things that he may effect his Desires, if it be in his Heart and Purpose, were it not for the Shame of the World, and for fear of losing his Credit, or some such Consideration, which hinders him, he is expressly guilty of the Breach of that Command, *Thou shalt not covet* : Which intends to prohibit all evil Designs, and close Projects of Mischief, tho' they never be put in Execution. This was *Abab's* Condition, who did not practise any thing against his Innocent Neighbour at the first, but had it in his Heart,  
it

it should seem by what followed, to dispossess him by irregular Courses, rather than go without that Garden which lay so convenient for him. Then it was that his foul Inclinations discovered themselves, when Injustice might be done by another, and he not seen in it, and his Wife had contrived a handsome Way to bring about this End, without a barefac'd Violence.

6. But the very worst Degree of all is, when Men will make Religion and sacred things stoop to their worldly Desires, becoming factious rather than be poor, and submitting themselves to irreligious Flatteries rather than be Underlings, and not in Favour with the People. This Covetousness is called by St. Peter, in *Simon Magus's* Case, who coveted for base Ends to be like the Apostles, *the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity; or the Complication of Wickedness;* and a great many Crimes involved one in another, out of which it was hard for him to extricate himself. *Acts 8. 23.*

Let us put a stop therefore to greedy Desires, for we know not whether they may proceed: If we find our selves inclined to this Distemper, let us look after a Cure presently; for it is the Root of all Evil, where Covetousness is, there is *neque amor, neque fides, neque misericordia*, as a great Philosopher speaks, *neither Love, nor Faith, nor Pity*; it being the worst natur'd Vice in the World. And it is of the more dangerous Disposition, because it is one of those Passions (Ambition is another of them) that are purely in the Mind; and for that Cause, is an Appetite not capable

able of Satiety, as Passions partly bodily are, but it is rather sharpened by enjoying, and increased by Possession.

And the sad Effects of it are almost incredible, had we not the Authority of the sacred Story, to vouch the Truth of those woful Examples which it hath left to Posterity.

There is none, I think, more amazing and dreadful than that of *Judas*, whose Covetousness first made him a Thief, nay, so shameless a Thief, that he was inclined thereby to rob the very poor. *John 12. 6.*

And *secondly* it disposed him to be a vile Hypocrite, and to pretend Care for the Poor, when he had none at all in his Heart, as you read there. *ver. 5.*

And *thirdly*, It made him a Traytor, nay, tempted him to betray the best Master in the World, who had also particular intrusted him with his Purse.

And *fourthly*, Being thus lewdly disposed, it betrayed him to the Devil, who had Power and License given him to promote these base Inclinations in his Heart. *John 18. 2.*

For it seems he was incensed at our Saviour for speaking against Covetousness; (the hatching of this Treason of his, being immediately recorded after our Saviour's commending the Act of the Woman, in spending that Oyntment on his Body, which *Judas* would have converted into Money) which the Devil perceiving, he egg'd his Indignation and covetous Anger to proceed further, and conceive an Intent of betraying him; when he could

not



S E R M O N XV. 419

not have the Money for the Oyntment, he resolved to make Money of his Master, whom he not only sold, but, (*Fifthly*,) such was the Meanness of his Spirit, and his sordid Love of Money, he sold him for a very small Sum, for no more than the Price of a Slave, which was thirty Shekels of Silver. *Exod. 21. 32.* The dirtiest, the most contemptible Gain you see by this is sweet and pleasant to a covetous Heart.

Nay, *sixthly*, he was very thankful to the High-Priest for so small a Sum; so the Word *Ἐξωμολόγησε*, *Luke 22. 6.* which we render, he promised, signifies in holy Scripture, he praised the Bargain and applauded his good Fortune; he chearfully accepted of the Offer, and confessed, as I may express it, that it was a great Gratitude for his Perfidiousness.

And *seventhly*, so great was his Thirst after a little Money, that he could think of nothing else: But this Desire stopt his Ears to the Admonition of our Saviour, who candidly represented to him the Danger of such Villany. *Mark 14. 21.*

And so, lastly, this covetous Humour delivered him up intirely to the Power of the Devil. For it is said, that after the Sop, the Devil entered into him, (when that good Counsel would not enter) who had put it before into his Heart to betray him. *John 13. 27.*

O how different was this Man's Spirit from that of the Father of the Faithful! *Abraham*, I mean, whose Son if one would not have allowed him to be, he would have taken it very ill, and

accounted it a great Reproach; which is the Humour of all Hypocrites, who are much displeased if they be not thought to be the most godly People. This good Man, you may observe, was so far from the Greediness of these titular Children of his, that he could content himself without those Goods, which one Way he had a clear Right unto, in the Account of all the World, and which he might have had a further Right unto another Way, if he had pleased to accept of the Offer; the Goods, I mean, of the King of Sodom, he had taken in Fight, which became his *Jure belli*, by the Right of War; for the Law of Nations gives such Things to the Conqueror: And besides this, the King of Sodom, who was the former Proprietor, would have confirmed his Title, for he freely offered them all to him, that so they might have been his *Jure donationis*, by the Right of Gift, from him that before was their Owner.

But he would by no Means have any of these Goods, no, not the least Scrap of them remain in his Possession: He had no covetous Desires of enriching himself by other Mens Misfortunes, or his own good Success in Arms. But tells him, as you read, Gen. 14. 22, 23. *I have lifted up my Hand (i. e. sworn) to the most high God, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth; that I will not take from a Thread, even to a shoelatchet (a Phrase to express the smallest Matter) and that I will not take any Thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich.*

This



# S E R M O N   X V.   421

This was not a Piece of Pride, or a vain-glorious Humour in *Abraham*, to refuse the Present that was made him (tho' every prudent and grave Person, as he was, ought to have a great Care of his Fame and Reputation, and not give occasion to any to say, that he is greedy of Riches, and glad to have them any way, and to snatch at all advantageous Offers, or do any unhandsome Thing) but he did it, 1<sup>st</sup>, That it might appear he undertook their War, not out of Desire of spoil, and to satisfy his covetous Appetite, but merely out of a pious Love that he bare to a Friend and Cousin, his Brother *Lot*. And, 2<sup>dly</sup>, that it might be apparent he depended, intirely on the Promise of God, and desired he might have the Honour, and not the King of *Sodom*, of giving him Riches; he had vowed it seems before, and that in the Presence of the Lord of all, that he would not enjoy any of these Goods, and the Reason seems to be contained in those Words, *Possessor of Heaven and Earth*. God had said he would bless him, and on his Word he resolved to trust for Increase and Multiplication of his Possessions; insomuch that he would not let any share with the great God, in this Honour of blessing him. He knew very well in whom he trusted, even in him who had all Things, and needed nothing, who would not be sparing to give him as great Things as these, because the World is his, and all that is therein; and would the rather bestow good Things on him, because he would receive them from none but himself.



A most worthy and generous Example this is, to teach us not to be greedy of all we can get, if it be by mean, tho' not unlawful Ways; and above all things to seek the Honour of God, and to study to do credit to our Religion, which we too much undervalue, when we pursue with too much Eagerness, and embrace with too much Passion, all Occasions of making our selves great and wealthy.

But it is Time to leave this, and to pass to some thing else. Let us then briefly consider,

## V.

How reasonable that Command is, *in every thing give Thanks.* 1 Theff. 5. 18. For we have enough always, and that is a great deal more than we deserve to have; if a Man should think himself ill dealt withal, and be apt to be ungrateful, he need only ask himself, Where did I lie last Night? Where did I make my last Meal? or, Where did I work and labour the last Day? Who gave me these Hands and Feet? Who bestowed on me this Health and Strength? But especially he may ask himself, Have I not abundant Means of being contented? Have I not the Promises of God, the Comfort of the holy Scriptures? &c. And then he may tell himself, when he hath answered these Questions, what Reason he hath to bless God. And again, we should remember always, that we need no more than enough; and again, that no more than enough is best for us: It is best for our Souls, that our Thoughts may not be distracted; it is best

# SERMON XV. 422

best for our Bodies, that we may not have temptations to Intemperance; it is best however for our Account at the great Day, because it is easier to manage a little Stewardship, than it is a great; be careful therefore for nothing, as the Apostle saith, but in every thing make known your Request to God, with Supplication and Thanksgiving; there is great Reason for it, if you consider all that hath been said, for we have much cause to be content, and if we give Thanks for it, that's a means, as you have heard, to make us still more contented. But the principal Thing I intend at this Time is to represent to you,

## VI.

The great Evil of murmuring, complaining, and giving way to Discontentedness of Mind: St. Jude puts this among the black Characters of the wicked and apostate Christians of those Days, ver. 16. *That they were murmurers, complainers, walkers after their own Lusts.* That is, they murmured as the Israelites (their Forefathers) had done in the Wilderness, Numb. 11. 1, 4. because they were in an afflicted and distressed Condition, as the Church generally was at that Time, and had not that Plenty, and perhaps Dainties, that they longed for; and it is very probable (which is *Grotius* his Conjecture) that they complained of the *Roman* Government (being desirous to recover their ancient Liberty, by throwing off that Yoke) tho' there was little Reason for it; none of the former Monarchies, either *Babylonian* or *Grecian*, using them with more

Gentleness and Civility than the *Romans* did; but nothing would satisfy these Malecontents, but to have their own Lust, and Heart's Desire: And that would not satisfy them neither, for they were proud Persons, and spoke great swelling Words of *Vanity*, admiring none but themselves and their own Party, which made them complain of, and be discontented with every Body else.

This is the Condition of many in the World at this Day, who are still muttering and grumbling if every thing be not done according to their Desire; that is, are always ill at ease, because their Desire can never be satisfied with any worldly Good; One complains of bad Trading; another of bad Government; one saith he hath a very hard Bargain; and another that he is not respected by his Neighbours; one is troubled because he is kept under, and such and such are preferred before him; and they also are not well pleased because they are not advanced higher, or are not regarded according to their Dignity. To cease which Complaints, that are without End, let us consider,

*First*, That this is a very *uncomfortable* Condition, and puts the Soul into very great Disorders; for, to say no more, such Men, as you have been often told, want not only that which they have not, but even that which they have; they want not only all things else, but themselves too, they possess not their own Souls, which are carried away by Things without them, they know not whither; they are seldom at home,  
and



and when they are there, they find nothing but Tumults and Disorders, which hurry them again away from themselves. Let it be considered also,

Secondly, How prejudicial this Temper of Mind is, to him that labours with it. For, 1<sup>st</sup>, it provokes God to with-hold those Blessings, which otherwise he might have bestowed. It puts a Man further off from those things, the want of which he complains about. He gets nothing but rather loses, by repining against God; as Theagenes in the Story tells his Chariclea, when she was summing up all their Miseries, and crying to Apollo, ποῖ ταῦτα ῥήσεις; where or when will there be an End of these Things? Thou dost, says he, by these unmannerly Complaints, but παροξύνειν τὸ θεόν, exasperate the Divinity, and sharpen its Displeasure against thee. Οὐ γὰρ ὀνειδίζειν ἀλλὰ παροξύνειν Χρέων· ὃ γὰρ ἐκ αἰτίας ἐξίηλθ'.

Heliodor.  
1. 1. Æthi.

ἔν τῷ κρείττονι. For we ought not to reproach but to beseech and intreat, when we are in Misery. The most excellent Nature is propitiated and rendred mild and gentle to us, by Prayers not by Accusations. There is nothing truer, we drive our selves away from the Port, at which we would arrive, by these Storms and blustering Passions. If we would be carried to the Haven we desire, let us be calm and of a still and quiet Disposition. For,

2<sup>dly</sup>, These Complaints endanger the Loss also of that which we have already. The Devil and our first Parents, were not well pleased in the

the Station wherein God first set them, and so they fell from it, into a worse.

It is a Saying of *Ben Syra*, a famous Man among the *Hebrews*, *He that saith what shall I eat with my Bread, take his Bread from him.* He deserves, he means to lose a good Thing, who repines because he hath not more with it. Thus *Balaam*, they observe, is found to be slain in the Battle with the *Midianites*, *Numb. 31. 8.* What did he there, say the Doctors who dispute about it in the *Talmud*? *R. Jobanan.* answers, he came to receive his Reward for the Feat he had done, in seducing *Israel* to the Destruction of four and twenty thousand of them.

And thus said *Mar. Zutra.* the Son of *Gemara.* *Tobias*, the vulgar Saying was fulfilled, *Sanhedr.* *The Camel went to beg Horns, and* *Cap. XI.* *they cut off his Ears.* They that cannot be contented but they must be gaping after more, have this for their Reward, that they do not always keep what they enjoy; especially, when they grumble at their present Condition, and quarrel because it is no better: And is it not a sad thing, instead of being raised higher, to find our selves to have caught a Fall? And yet there is something more to be lamented behind, which is, that,

3dly, These Complaints make us more miserable in that worse Condition, when we fall into it; if we cannot bear our present Estate, we shall ill agree with another that may have more Pressures in it. *Jeremy*, I remember, tells us, how his Townsmen, the People of *Anathoth* fought

sought his Life, as you may read in the latter End of the eleventh Chapter of his Prophecy, *ver. 19, 20, 21, &c.* and yet notwithstanding, they flourished, and grew so great, as to tempt him to Discontent; for he begins the twelfth Chapter, with a Complaint to God, saying, *Wherefore doth the Way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?* and he desires to be revenged of them, saying, *ver. 3. Pull them out like Sheep for the Slaughter, and prepare them for the day of Slaughter.* But in this Beginning of his Passion, the Voice of God quiets and appeases his Spirit with these Words, *ver. 5. If thou hast run with the Footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with Horses? And if in the Land of Peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?* Which is as much as to say, if thou canst not endure the Malice and Rage of this little City *Anathoth*, then how wilt thou be able to brook the Fury of the Men of *Jerusalem*, against whom I must have thee to prophecy? If these assault thee as a Company of Footmen, the other will be as terrible as Horsemen, much stronger, and mightier, and swifter, to execute their malicious Intentions. If whilst thou enjoyest thy own Estate, thou canst not be satisfied, because of their Hatred, which makes some seek thy Destruction; what wilt thou do, when all shall be swallowed up by the Men of *Jerusalem*? Who will in great Violence and Rage break in upon thee, as *Jordan* doth upon the lower Grounds, when he swells over his Banks.

That



That is, How wilt thou bear it, when they shall cast thee into a Prison, nay, thrust thee into a nasty Dungeon, when thou shalt sink in the Dirt and Mire?

It is certain, that if we complain so heavily now, we shall not know what to do with ourselves hereafter, when we may be worse; as we have reason to think we shall be, if we cannot forbear our present Complaints.

But there is something beyond this to be considered, which is,

*Thirdly*, That it is a most *sinful* and *damnable* Condition, which not only brings upon us temporal Evils and Calamities, and raises great Troubles in our own Spirits; but renders us very obnoxious to the Displeasure of the eternal God. For,

1. It dishonours him very much, and represents him as tho' he was not good and kind to his Creatures. It disparages his Providence, as if he was not wise, or careful, or concerned for us. And it disparages his Promises, as if they were not just, faithful and true. Nay,

2. It hath been the very Mother or Nurse of Atheism and Irreligion in some Tempers; it hath made many doubt of the Being and Providence of the Almighty, when they have been denied those Things, which they set their Hearts very much upon, or when they suffered the Loss of them, tho' they took themselves to have deserved better. Thus some of the *Roman* People cryed out, when they saw such a base Fellow as *Licinus* honoured with a Marble Monument, and *Cato* have but a poor one, and *Pompey* the Great, none at all,

*Quis*

*Quis putet esse Deos? Who can believe there are any Gods?* Other such Mutterings we find in their Books, when they saw Things carried very unequally, as they fancied, and those who had the greatest Care of publick Good, oppressed; and the like Vice they are still in Danger of, who have high Thoughts of themselves, but are bereaved of those Things on which they dote, or disappointed of those Hopes, for whose Accomplishment they have been earnest Sollicitors. This tempts them to fall out with their own Thoughts so far, as to question that which before they sacredly believed. And therefore,

3. This must needs be the Cause of many other Sins; the Rise and Original of this discontented Spirit, is Sin, yea, a great many Sins; and therefore the Streames that issue from it, can be nothing else but muddy, filthy and impure. It arises from gross Ignorance, or careless Unbelief; from a great Vanity and Lightness of Mind, which makes a Man weary of every thing that he hath, and sometime from Pride and haughtiness, which makes him think he deserves every thing that he hath not; and therefore what can follow from it, but sundry Sins of Omission, as Neglect of Prayer, Thanksgiving, Charitableness and showing of Mercy to the Poor, or great Distraction in those holy Duties, and want of Chearfulness in doing good to the Necessitous? With many Sins of Commission, such as are Evil-speaking, envious Detractions, Injustice, Oppression, Extortion, and what not?

We

## 430 S E R M O N XV.

We will make use of one Example only to represent this, which is that of *Ahab*,

He took a Pett, you know, and grew fullen, because *Naboth* would not part with his Vineyard to him. This Discontent he betrayed by the Dejection of his Spirit, by the Sadness of his Countenance, by forsaking his Business, and his Stomach's forsaking him. And the Original of it, at first, was nothing more than an inordinate Desire, without any Purpose, that we can find, to wrest this Land from him by violent Means: He offered to buy it of him, either with Money, or with other Land as good, yea better, in exchange for it, but did not make any Attempt to force it out of his Possession; and yet abundance of other Sins issued from this one Desire of his, not being stopt up and damm'd from running any further: Letters are writ against an innocent Person, false Accusations are forged, witnesses are suborned and bribed; the Judges are over-awed; an unjust Sentence pronounced; *Naboth* murdered, nay, Godliness is made the Pretence of all, the Name of the most High drawn in to serve their vile Designs, and much Hypocrisy added to the great Heap of other Sins.

To all which *Ahab* gave his Consent, at least afterward, by going to take Possession of his Vineyard, who was in so ungodly a manner cast out of it, and out of the World. This discovered how that unquiet Desire had wrought his Heart over, and disposed it to embrace any, the basest Means, to compass his End, which at the first,



first, perhaps, he would have abhorred the Thoughts of.

Be affrighted, I beseech you, at this Instance, and consider what a Gulph of Wickedness, Discontentedness, indulged and harboured may plunge you into. You know not into what a Sea of Sin and Mischief you are casting your selves, while you go on repining and murmuring at your Condition. You may make no Bones (as we say) of false Accusation, false Swearing, injurious Dealing, griping Exactions, Bribery, Flattery, Lying, Perfidiousness, false Weights and Measures, and more Sins of the like dangerous Nature than I can reckon. At least, Neglect of God, and Religion, Uncharitableness, and all those Sins which are an Omission of your Duty, are like to be easily swallowed and digested by you. This is too clearly intimated in the Counsel of St. *John Baptist*, to the *Soldiery*, who came to ask him what he would have them do? *Luke 3. 14. Do no Violence, saith he, accuse no Man falsely; and be content with your Wages.* This last affirmative Precept, he opposes to the other two negative Precedents, shewing that they who were not content with their Pay, would be inclined, having Power so to do, to plunder and pillage openly, or else by false Accusations, upon pretended Crimes, squeeze the poor People, and drain their Money from them; that is, do any Cruelty, or Injustice, to satisfy their greedy Lusts. And you shall always observe, that the more Power and Strength any Person hath to do Mischief, the greater will his Crimes be, if he be

be not contented: For whom may not they oppress securely? Against whom may not they be believed, tho' they speak never so falsely? And how many Colours are they able to devise, to give a fair Countenance to their injurious Actions? This, *Æsop* hath wittily represented, in the Fable of the *Wolf* and the *Lamb*, who both came to drink at the same River, but the *Wolf* was nearest the Spring-Head, and the *Lamb* further off, below him. To whom the *Wolf*, having a mind to pick a quarrel, said, how dare you dirty and trouble the Water in this Fashion, making it unfit for me to drink? That is impossible, replied the innocent Creature very mildly, for the Stream comes not from me to you, but from you to me; so that if it be muddy where you drink, I cannot be the Cause of it. What do you say, answered the Beast of Prey, not at all confounded with this just Defence, do you not remember what malicious Words you spake against me six Months ago? Alas! said the *Lamb* again, I was born long after that Time: Then it was your Father, said the *Wolf*, and fell upon him furiously, and rent him in Pieces.

*Sic nocet in noctu nocuus, causamq; incendi  
Invenit. Heu! regnant qualibet arte lupi.*

Saith an old Manuscript, reciting this Fable as *Phædrus* doth, Thus the innocent are oppressed by the Guilty, and they never want a Cause for their Injuries. Alas! there are such *Wolves* that will live by every Art, or reign in every Trade.

That's

That's the Moral of it ; when Greediness and Power meet together, they will soon find Pretences to undo the Weak. There are Forgeries now at hand ; they can devise Crimes that never were thought on, and be believed perhaps by those who worship their Greatness. But let us leave this, and observe once more, *which* is the fourth Thing, that

4. It is the Cause of such Sins, as are the Punishment of those who are discontented : It tempts them not only to think ill of God, but to speak ill of Him ; nay, to wish Mischief upon themselves. Sometimes Men say, would to God we were dead, when they have lost something to which they have extremely ingaged their Affection : To say no body in the World is so miserable as I am, is a very light and favourable Expression of their Discontent ; they proceed sometimes so far, in desperate Speeches against divine Providence, that God takes them at their Word, when they call for some Mischief upon themselves.

An eminent Example of which, you have in the murmuring *Israelites*, who in a raging Fit of Discontent, when they were just upon the Borders of *Canaan*, cryed out, *would God we had died in Egypt, or would God we had died in this Wilderiness*. Numb. 14. 2. Now tho' the former part of their Wish could not be fulfilled, because they were come alive out of *Egypt*, yet the latter, you may observe, God granted them, much to their Grief and Affliction, when it was too late to bethink themselves better. For he saith,

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yea,



## 434 SERMON XV.

yea, swears, ver 28, 29. *As truly as I live, and as you have spoken in mine Ears, so will I do unto you; your Carcasses shall fall in this Wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole Number, which have murmured against me doubtless ye shall not come into the Land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, &c.*

The like you may observe again, that when they said there, ver. 4. one to another, *Let us make a Captain, and let us return into Egypt.* They seem to me to have had their Wish in great Part; for God saith to Moses, ver. 25. *Turn you and get you into the Wilderness, by the Way of the Red sea.* Tho' this Command might be partly to secure them from the Irruption of the *Amalekites* (as seems to be suggested in the foregoing Words) yet I cannot but look upon it as a punishment also for their Rebellion, that they should be sent back in the Way that led to *Egypt*, and brought nigh it again, (according to their froward Desire) tho' they did not enter into it.

Nay, you may observe more than this, that some of them were so discontented with their present Condition, that they praised their Slavery in *Egypt* far more than it, and cared not what Lyes and Slanders they uttered in their perverse Humour, of Murmuring against God. Read but *Numb. 16. 13.* and there you will find *Korah, Dathan and Abiram*, have the Face to say, that *Moses* had brought them out of a Land flowing with Milk and Honey to kill them in the Wilderness. Which was so notori-

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ous a Calumny, that there could not be one more impudent, they wearying *Moses* with their Complaints there, because of their Labour in the Iron Furnace, under an intolerable Bondage; But their discontented Passions, after God had shown himself so merciful and gracious to them, made them forget both all their former Miseries, and all his Favours, and rail most shamelessly at the Officers of God, who had been the Instruments of their Deliverance. Men mind not what they say, when they are displeased and vexed at the State wherein God's Providence places them; they utter many Times not only false and ungrateful, but bitter Language, against every thing that they think is the Cause of their Trouble; yea, even against God himself. And therefore God shewed a strange Judgment upon these Rebels, for this among other Crimes; and made the Earth swallow them up, that they should not so much as live in a Wilderness any longer. And so I could tell you how many others having spoken discontented Words, have suffer'd the very thing that they wish'd should come upon them.

And let this be added, that they who will give way to this complaining and murmuring Humour, will be so apt to find fault with every thing that God himself cannot please them, but there will be something or other to breed a Quarrel. You may see it in this Story which I have recited of the *Israelites*, who were as angry at *Moses*, as they had been at *Pharaoh*; and no better pleased out of *Egypt*, than in it; and no

better pleased in *Canaan*, than they had been either in *Egypt* or in the Wilderness. For there they forsook their God, and thought strange Gods better, till they smarted for it soundly, and then they returned to his Worship, and then fell off again, to and fro, backward and forward, I know not how many Times.

Take heed therefore to your selves, least you should fall by the like Unbelief and Distrust of God; remember the Advices I have formerly given you; labour after this heavenly Temper, of being well pleased in every Estate, and if you would prevent all the Mischiefs that else may come upon you, give not way to the Beginning of any evil Desire; stay it before it proceed any further and grow unruly; for you know not where it will end, if you put not an End to it then, where it begun.

And for a Conclusion of all these Discourses, let me desire you again to resolve, that it is best to submit your selves, and all you have, to God's Will; believe that he hath already made choice of that better Condition for you, of which you are so desirous; lay this down for a firm Principle, that to have your own Will in every thing, is not safe, nor the Way to be satisfied: You may draw greater Inconveniencies on your selves, some time or other, than the Will of God ever doth. It was a pretty Consideration of *Socrates*, that if all the evil Things which Men endure, were thrown off their Backs, and laid upon one great Heap, and then every Man in the World being at perfect Liberty from all Burden, was to come and  
take



# S E R M O N XV. 437

take an equal Share with the rest of Mankind in these Miseries, most Men would be willing to take up rather the Burden that they brought and go their Way with it, than make such a Change as to bear as much as any body else. There is no Man but would see something or other there, that he would have no Mind so much as to taste of; and therefore would say, give me my own again, I will have no other.

Men are well, if they could see it, and we may say a great deal more than *Socrates* did, that that if God should lay before us all the good Things of the World, and bid us chuse what Portion we pleased of them, we should be very Fools if we did not desire God to take that Work into his own Hands and chuse for us. Nay, if we did not wish to be as we are, unless he saw any thing else to be better and more conducing to our Welfare. It would be safest for us to go away as we are, and say, I like not to be my own Carver, I am not wise enough to chuse my own Portion; Lord, give me what thou seest best for me, for I send all these Things back again to thee, that thou mayst distribute them as thou plearest.

*O continue thy loving Kindness, saith the Psalmist, to them that know thee, and thy Righteousness to Men of upright Heart. Psal. 36. 11.* who are these *Recticordes*, saith *St. Austin*, they that are right and straight in Heart? Even they that follow the Will of God in all Things; to them God will ever continue his Goodness and his Faithfulness. The Will of God is, that some-

time thou shouldest be well, and sometimes it is his Will, that thou shouldest be sick; if when thou art well, the Will of God is very acceptable, but when thou art sick it is so disgustful, that thou complaineſt of it, then thou art not right in Heart. Why? because thou wilt not direct thy Will to God's, but would'ſt have his Will bend to thine, *Ille recta eſt, ſed tu eſ curvus, His Will is ſtraight, but thou art crooked,* Thy Will is to be corrected to his, and not his to be crooked to thine, and then thou wilt have a right Heart. Art thou well as to all worldly Things? Bleſs God who ſo comforts thee: Art thou afflicted any Ways? Bleſs him notwithstanding, that he proves and amends thee. Then wilt thou have a right Heart, and be able to ſay with the *Pſalmiſt, I will bleſs the Lord at all Times, his Praise ſhall be in my Mouth continually.* He only hath his Heart ſet aright towards God, who deſires ſincerely that God's Will ſhould be done, rather than his own. Thus he.

And indeed this one Leſſon (which we therefore ought often to repeat as I have done) is the Sum of all the Commandments; it is the Compendium of all Virtues, the Epitome of the holy Writings; the Eaſe of all our Cares; the Solace of all our Afflictions; the very Top of Divine Love; the very Depth of Humility; the higheſt Pitch of Piety; it is all that is excellent, becauſe it makes us the perfect Friend of God. There is a ſtrange Story that *Leontius* tells, concerning *John*, the Patriarch of *Alexandria*, to whom a  
Citizen

Citizen brought a Sum of Money to be disposed to charitable Uses, adding that it was all he had, and desiring him only to let him have his Prayers, for an only Son of his who was at Sea, that God would keep him safe. The good Father took it, and prayed earnestly for the young Man; but about thirty Days after he dyed, and the rich Ship also was foundered in the Sea, but the Goods saved; when the News of this arrived, it almost broke the Citizens Heart, nor could he be relieved by all the Comforts which the Patriarch gave him. At length he thought one Night, that he saw in his Dream this very Patriarch standing by him, and saying, why dost thou grieve and torment thy self in this Fashion? Didst thou not desire me to ask of God that thy Son might be safe? Behold, now he is safe indeed, and placed out of all Danger of miscarrying: Believe it, if he had come to thee, he had been lost; and if thou hadst not been so charitable to the Poor, all thy Goods had been lost also, together with the Ship. Arise, therefore, and give God Thanks, that thy Son is safe, and that all the rest is not cast away. When he awaked he was abundantly satisfied with these Thoughts, and went to the Patriarch, telling him what had happened, and giving Thanks to God, whom he acknowledged to be a kind Father, when he doth what we would yet have done, as well as when he doth what we desire.

According to this Pattern, and the Sense of this Story, let us govern our selves, and submit our Desires to an higher Wisdom, and then we



## 440      S E R M O N   XV.

shall never be discontented ; we shall believe that it is well done, whatsoever happens ; and that if it had been otherwise, it might have been worse, tho' we perhaps cannot discern it. Let us not desire too passionately any thing but what is, for fear we should fall into a more troublesome Condition, as a Punishment of our Discontent, with that which was easy and peaceable ; God always grants the Desires of good Men one way or other, if not just as they wished, yet so as they would have wished, if they were as well acquainted with what is fit, as he himself is : In such Thoughts as these, we must repose and settle our selves. We may tumble up and down, if we please in our own unquiet Desires, but Rest we shall have none, till we fix our selves in an unmoveable Resolution, to acquiesce in that Will, which can neither err, nor be envious. That great Happiness, he, in his infinite Goodness, bestows upon us all, whose Will it is, that we should be contented with such things as we have, and therefore will not deny us the Grace so to be.



## P R A Y E R   XV.

**O** God, with whom is Fulness of Joy, and at whose right Hand are Pleasures for evermore ; I thank thee with all my Soul, that I may draw nigh unto thee, and that thou hast represented

sented thy self so gracious unto us, as not to affright us from thee, but to invite us to approach unto thee with the chearful Affections of Love and Hope and Joy in thee. It is an infinite Favour I am sensible, that I am admitted into thy Presence, and if I had nothing else to thank Thee for, I ought to rejoice and be glad in this, that I may open my Heart unto Thee, and ease my Soul of all its Cares and Fears and troublesome Desires, into thy Bosom, and there rest in delightful Thoughts of thy Love and good Will towards me, which I ought to value more than all the World.

I thank thee, O Lord, for this happy Leisure wherein I may have Recourse unto thee, and that I have any Heart to make Use of it, and am not quite a Stranger to all Converse with Thee. I am much beholden to Thee, that my Head is not so full of other Business, nor my Heart so much in Love with the Things of this Life, as to divert my Mind from the Happiness which I taste in these Addresses to Thee, and in the Meditation of thy inestimable Kindness, which when I have thought of to all Eternity, I shall never come to the Bottom of it. For it is as great as thy self; who art infinite in Power and in Wisdom, and in Bounty, scattering thy Blessings in various Manners, not only upon me, but upon all thy Creatures.

O that my Mind was more stedfastly fixed in sweet Contemplations of it, till my Heart was perfectly satisfied in it, and filled with such Peace  
and

and Joy, and Comfort, as might make any Condition of Life, not only tolerable, but easy to me. Possess me at least with such a Sense of Thee, and of thy abundant Mercy towards me, as may root out of me all those covetous Desires, which are displeasing to Thee, and injurious to my own Tranquillity; give me a soft and tender Heart, sensible of the least of thy Favours, as greater than I deserve; and especially make me so apprehensive of heavenly things, that the Taste of them, may assuage all inordinate Appetites after other Enjoyments, as little and inconsiderable, in compare with those which thou hast blessed me withal: Endue me with that noble and generous Disposition, that I may not only eschew all sinful Courses, but whatsoever is indecent and unbecoming one, who hath such glorious Hopes in another World: Help me to honour my Religion, by giving thee perpetual Thanks, and speaking good of thy Name at all Times; and whatsoever Temptations I may meet withal to Murmuring and Complaints, preserve me in such a settled Belief of thy fatherly Love, that I may never be guilty of so great Ungratitude to it, as to repine at any Condition into which thou shalt be pleased to dispose me: Rectify my Mind and Will and set them so straight toward Thee, that they may always lye even with thy wise Will, and chearfully follow it, whethersoever thou shalt lead me.

I ought not, I know, to distrust thy Wisdom and Goodness, who hast declared that thou wilt continue thy loving Kindness to them that  
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# S E R M O N XV. 443

know Thee, and thy Righteousness to Men of upright Hearts. Lord as thou hast made me to know Thee, and bent my Heart to comply with Thee; so preserve me alway in this holy Disposition; that I may maintain my Uprightness and Integrity to the End, till I come to reap the Fruit of it, in eternal Union with thee.

And for that End, I beseech Thee to settle all those holy Truths in my Mind, which I feel so powerful, to compose and quiet me into a perfect Peace and happy Tranquility: Make them one with me, and work them into the Temper of my Spirit, that being guided alway by an heavenly Reason and divine Wisdom, I may be raised above all the Troubles of this Life, and remain in a calm and undisturbed Expectation of a better: Possess thy self intirely of my Heart, that I may not converse with Thee as a Stranger, but as a familiar Friend, and as my Father. O! that these heavenly Truths may not be as a Guest that tarrieth but for a Day with me; but may make their Abode in my Soul, and dwell with me for ever, that so I may feel the Strength and Virtue of them constantly in my Heart, overcoming all Inclinations to Covetousness, to Discontent, to Impatience, to Trouble of Spirit, and unsettledness of Mind; and placing me in such an immutable Rest and Peace, as may be the Beginning of that eternal rest which Christ hath prepared for his People.

Now

## 444 S E R M O N XV.

Now to him that hath loved me, and dearly bought me by his Sons most pretious Blood, and given me the Comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the Promise of Immortality, and disposed my Mind to these holy Thoughts, and filled me with these pious Desires, and given me a Will to submit unto him, and made me feel how happy it is, to love him, and to be led by him, and given me joyful Hope of abiding for ever in his Love, be everlasting Praise and Thanksgiving rendred, from a most grateful Heart, by me and by every Creature in Heaven and Earth. Amen.



TWO



T W O  
S E R M O N S  
O N

*Michaelmas-Day, 1672.*



MATTH. XVIII. 10.

---For I say unto you, that in Heaven their  
Angels do always behold the Face of my Fa-  
ther which is in Heaven.

**T**HAT there are *Angels*, I mean a  
kind of Spiritual Beings, much su-  
perior to us, tho' invisible by us,  
is here supposed in my Text. But  
it is a Truth that hath been acknow-  
ledged by all Nations and all Ages of the World,  
and asserted likewise by very substantial Ar-  
guments against the *Epicureans*, and such like  
gross and drowsy People.

The



The common Sort of Philosophers proved it by such Evidences as these.

*First*, From *Spectres* and *Apparitions*, of which all Histories, in all Time, are very full. *Secondly*, From their Oracles, and the Answers of their Gods (as they called them) which could not be performed by any Art or Device of Men.

*Thirdly*, From Magick, and all the Wonders that were performed by certain Persons, whom they could not but conclude to be familiar with some Spirits or Dæmons; because it lay not within the Compass of Man's Wit to produce such Effects, as their Eyes plainly beheld. And *Lastly*, From Prodigies and portentous Appearances, sometimes in the Air, sometimes in the Earth and the Sea, which were wont, they say, to precede great Wars, and the overthrow of Empires, and other such notable Mutations in the World.

Now that which the Vulgar concluded thus from Observations of Sense, the more refined and speculative Wits concluded from Principles of Reason, the chief of which was this, That otherwise there would be a great Gap, a vast wide Breach, in the Universe, if there were no Beings at all between us mortal Men, and the most high God, the blessed Creator of all; they observed, that from the lowest Degree of being here upon this Earth, (which is but a little Mite of the great World) there is a gradual Ascent unto us Men; from inanimate Creatures (or Things without Life) unto *Plants*; and from *Plants* unto *Animals* (or *sensitive* Beings; and from them unto us who  
are

are *rational*: And that in all these Kinds of Creatures, there are also several Degrees, or Steps, whereby Nature rises to the Top of that kind, which hath some Resemblance of the next sort of Beings above them. For some Brutes are more sensible and apprehensive than others; and some Plants more beautiful, and approaching also nearer to Sense; and of things without Life, some are far more splendid and amazing than their Neighbours. It was incredible therefore they thought, that above Man there should be no Degrees of Being, of several Sorts also, till we come to God himself: They conceived the Air, and the Sky, all those vast Tracts of Space, which we behold and imagine, not to be empty Wilderneffes and barren Desarts, but as fully replenished and peopled with Spirits and invisible Creatures, as this Earth is with Men and other Bodies. And that it was as absurd to think there should be no Creatures between God and us, as that there should be none between us and Stones. This Argument, together with those from Sense, they took to be no less than a Demonstration.

To which if you add the more full Confirmation, which the Revelation of God unto the *Jews*, and unto us Christians, hath given us of this Point, there being several Appearances of Angels to the Fathers, and unto *Moses*, and still more illustrious, to our *Saviour Christ* and his *Apostles*, who have verified it abundantly to us, I do not see how we can doubt of this Truth, unless we will disbelieve all History, nay, our Reason, and the very Senses of Mankind.

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This

This being then agreed upon by all People, whether mere Heathens, or Jews, or Christians, or Mahometans; you must know that there is also as general a Consent, that these Angels or spiritual Creatures, are the Ministers of the most high God; they are represented to us, even in the holy Scriptures, as Part of the celestial Court, that are employed by God, the Sovereign of the World, as he pleases. And so much the Word Ἀγγέλους, *Angels*, imports *Messengers* sent by him upon such Errands to this World, as he thinks good to grant Commission to them, and order them to appear in.

I find also, that there is as universal a Belief, that there are several Ranks and Orders of them, (as there are of other kinds of Beings) and that they are not all of one Quality and Dignity, but some much superior to others, who are, as it were, the Commanders of the rest of that heavenly Host. This some think is expressed in the Language of holy Writ, by *Thrones*, and *Dominions*, and *Principalities*, and *Powers*. Howsoever, I shall have occasion to illustrate the Truth of the Thing, before I have done, for the full Explication of my Text.

And, *Lastly*, that I may no longer hold you in this Preface, I find it the constant Opinion of the World, that these Angels are assigned to several Offices, and preside even over all Creatures here below. There being some who are not only ἐφ' ὧν τῆς ἐθνῶν, as *Moses* speaks, the Guardians of the several Nations, of the World, but τῶν κοσμητῶν τοῦ κόσμου, *Conservators and Keepers of the*

the Elements of this World, as *Arctas* speaks, and concludes from *Rev.* 14. 18. Comment. in Rev. cap. 44. & cap. 48. where you read of an Angel that had power over the Fire; and from 16. 5. where you read of an *Angel of the Waters*. Hence he thinks we have sufficient ground to believe, that some of them have the Command over the Air, others over the Water, others over the Earth, and others of the Fire; and so proportionably, that some have the care of one Species of Creatures among us, and some of another; nothing doubting but that they have a more special super-intendency over Mankind, the chief of God's Works in this inferior World; and more particularly take care of those who are Good, and fear God, as the most worthy of all other Men, and nearest to the Angelical World. And whatsoever question we may make of the rest of their Belief, we cannot doubt, if we believe the holy Scriptures, of the truth of the last part of it, that there are some of those excellent Beings, who are Ministers of God for the good of Men, especially of those that Believe. This the Christian Religion hath above all others assured us of; we have the Word of the blessed Apostles for it, that they are *Ministring Spirits sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation; Heb.* 1. 14. Nay, the Words of our Lord and Master here in my Text, that the Angels even of the weakest Christians, behold the Face of God in Heaven.



From which Words, I design to discourse of these two Things.

*First*, What the Office or Employment of the holy Angels is, to which they are assigned by the Sovereign Lord of all, in regard of Men, expressed here in these Terms, *they behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.*

*Secondly*, What Persons they are for whom they are most officious, and of whom they take the greatest Care, included in the Word, *their, Christ's little Ones*, the smallest and feeblest of the Faithful, (spoken of before;) from which we may gather what they do for the rest of the Body of Christ.

Which two Things being cleared, it will be most seasonable to touch, in the Conclusion, upon the Coherence and Dependance of these Words, with the rest of our Saviour's Discourse from the beginning of this Chapter; they being a Reason, as you may discern by the Particle, *for*, why we should be careful to believe our selves to the Comfort and Incouragement even of the meanest Christians.

I begin with the first, the Office and Employment of the holy Angels for our Good and Welfare, which unless we understand, we shall not be so grateful to God, as we ought, for their Ministry, it being commonly Invisible, and to be discerned by nothing but a serious Mind, especially when possess'd with a belief of the Writings of the Men of God.

PART

## P A R T I.

THE Scripture then, you must know, represents God unto us as the Majesty of Heaven and of Earth, the Supream Lord and Governour of all Things; who although he be every where, yet exhibites or shows his most glorious Presence more especially in the Heavens, which are called the *Throne of God*. There his Majesty doth, as it were, keep its Court, from thence he issues out his Orders, concerning the Government, the Preservation and Punishment of all his Subjects; and there, consequently, the Divine Majesty and Glory is attended by the most Noble and Excellent of them all; as a King among us hath those still about him who are of the highest Quality, and eminent Rank in his Dominions. Now as those Persons wait upon an earthly Prince, and are ready by him to be sent as his Embassadors or Messengers, in any Employment that he hath occasion to make use of their Service: Just so are the Angels represented as the glorious Ministers of Almighty God, who attending upon him in his Celestial Court, are always at hand to be dispatched about such Business, and to take upon them such Charges as he thinks good to commit to them throughout the whole World, for the good of his lower sort of Subjects, especially of us the Children of Men.

And that I take to be the principal meaning of this Phrase in my Text, their Angels *behold the face of my Father*; as if he had said, they

stand in the Presence of God as his Ministers and Servants; they wait upon him in Heaven, where they behold the Majesty of his Glory, and they look up unto him to see what Orders he will give them, and on what Messages he will be pleased to send them for the good of my Disciples; nay, they are so ready to execute his Pleasure, and fulfil his Commands, that the least Signification of his Will is enough to determine theirs, and dispose them to a cheerful Obedience; for those words *behold his face*, seem to be a Metaphor borrowed from good Servants, who being well acquainted with their Masters Inclinations and Desires, have their Eye continually upon him, and presently move *ad nutum ejus*, at his beck; and upon the least Motion of his Head or his Eye, go and dispatch that which they know to be his Pleasure. Such is the willing Disposition of these high Officers of Almighty God, whom *Greg. Nazianzen* Orat. 38. calls *λαμπρότης δευτερά, δαίμονιοι τῆς πρώτης λαμπρότης*, *Secondary Splendors, the Ministers and Attendants of the first Brightness*. The greater they are, the greater Reason they see there is, that they should be most obsequious to him, from whom they have received so high a Dignity, and fly as quick as Lightning to execute his holy Will, when they have the least notice of it given from his Divine Presence.

So the manner of this Speech taken from the *Hebrews* being thus explained, and put into words more familiar to us, I am to show you, that



that the Office of these Heavenly Ministers, to which they are deputed by the Lord of all, relates to the whole Man, both to our Bodies and to our Souls. They attend upon him to receive his Commandments for the good of our outward Man, being the most noble of all Gods visible Works upon this Earth; but most especially for the good of our Spirits, which are far more dear both to him and to them, as nearer of kin to Celestial Beings.

Of the former I shall treat at this time, wherein we shall meet with no great Difficulty, it being a Thing acknowledged by all the World; and I shall leave the other for a Discourse by itself, because it is more obscure and hard to be traced.

1. The Charge then that they have concerning our Bodies, is this, that they be a Guard and a Security unto us; that they watch over us, to preserve us from Dangers, especially on some Occasions where it would be impossible for us otherways to avoid them. Of this we find very frequent mention in holy Writ. *Jacob* wishes at his Death, that the Angel which had redeemed him from all Evil, might bless the two Sons of *Joseph*, *Gen.* 48. 16. And *David* professes himself of this Belief, that the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them, *Psal.* 34. 7. And *Isaiab* acknowledges, that when the *Israelites* were in an afflicted and distressed Condition, the Angel of his Presence saved them, 53. 9. And the Notion of this tutelage and custody of

the Angels was so rooted in the Minds of Heathens, that they assigned to every Man a particular Keeper, who took the Charge of him as soon as he was born, and if he did well, would not forsake him, nor deliver him up to the Power of evil Angels.

Nor were the Ancient Fathers of the Church averse to this Opinion, but rather inclined to believe it. St. Basil upon that Place of the *Psalms* now mentioned, expressly declares, that *παντι πιστευοντι εις τον κυριον αγγελος παρεδρευει, &c.* To every one who believeth on the Lord, (i. e. every Christian) there is an Angel that is his Companion, and, as one may call him, his Assistant-Genius, who is always at his Side, if he do not chase him away by wicked Works; for as the Smoak, says he, drives away Bees, and noisome Smells drive away Doves, *ετι η τ ρυλακη τ ζωης, &c.* even so doth filthy Vice, and the Works of Darkness, drive away the Angel-Keeper and Preserver of our Life. If thou hast any good Works in thy Soul, worthy of Angelical Custody and Security; if thou hast a Mind richly stored with divine Truth, God will give thee this Guard, and even Wall thee about with a great many Angels, rather than it should be spoiled. And so he saith upon another *Psalme*, alluding to the Words of my Text, to every one of the Faithful, there is *αγγελος παρεσκευμενος, an Angel yoked together with him*, who is worthy to behold the Face of God in Heaven. Nay, he quotes these very Words in his third Book against *Eunomius* to prove it, that every faithful Person hath

hath an Angel for his Companion, who is, as it were, his Governour, Tutor and Keeper, directing and guiding his Life; and adds, *ἐδὲς ἀνγέλῳ*, no Man gainsays this, being mindful of the Words of our Lord, saying, *despise not one of these little ones, for their Angels always behold, &c.* And therefore the Author of the Questions and Answers to the Orthodox (under the Name of *Justin Martyr*) asserting this Opinion, that every Man is attended with a Guardian Angel, confidently adds, *καὶ δὲ ἡ θεία γράφῃ λέγει*, according as the Divine Writing tells us. And St. Hierom upon these Words of our Saviour, cries out, *Great is the Dignity of Souls, who have, from their Birth, Angelum delegatum, a delegate Angel*, commissioned from Heaven for their Custody. The same is the Sense of divers others, that at least from their new Birth, *i. e.* their Baptism, Men have such a Spirit appointed by God to wait upon them, and look after them, as one doth after a little Child, that he take no Hurt; who perhaps grounded their Opinion upon that Place, *Act. 12. 15.* where when the Damsel *Rhode* told the Company who were assembled at Prayer, that *Peter* was at the Gate; some said it could not be, for he was fast in Prison, but it was his Angel.

From whence indeed we may conclude thus much, and no more, that it was an Opinion among the *Jews*, that every Man had his Guardian Angel; but whether it be indeed so or no, is not a Point of Faith, nor hath been determined for such by the Christian Church; but left



at liberty as an uncertain and doubtful Opinion, though having great Probability in it, and sometime generally embraced. Nor need we much trouble our selves about it, since we are sure it is either so or better; either one or more taking Care of us, especially if we study to do well. *Origen's* Words, methinks, are very significant, alledging the same Place in the *Psalms*; the Angels look upon those who imitate God together with themselves, as their συγγενεις καὶ φίλους, their Kinsmen and Friends, and upon that account hold themselves obliged to work together for their Safety, and come to do them Courtesies and good Offices, as if there were a League and Covenant between them for that Purpose.

But I prevent my self too much in the Second general Head, which concerns the Persons of whom they take a more particular Charge. Let us turn from this therefore, and, to make our Conceptions more plain concerning the Business which is before us, let us consider that their Office is to preserve us, *First*, From the Incursions of Devils, or evil Angels; *Secondly*, From the malicious Contrivances of evil Men; and, *Thirdly*, From other hurtful things.

1. *First*, I say, from the Assaults of Devils, and the Angels of Darkness. All the World hath acknowledged that there are two sorts of Spirits, some of which are degenerate, and have apostatized from God, and being banished from the Presence of his Glory, and cast out of the Heavenly Court, are very malignant to Mankind, especially

especially to all those who are in the Favour of God; others that have preserved their Integrity, and persist in their Obedience, and so retain their first Estate and ancient Dignity; continuing God's Ministers, and heartily loving the Good of God's Creatures, of those, above all others, who are faithful to God, as they themselves are. From whence it follows, that these of the better sort, oppose themselves to the spiteful Designs of those disloyal and wicked Spirits. They set themselves against them as their Enemies, because they are the Enemies of God and Goodness. As the Devil is called our *Adversary*, and he and his Angels fight against us, and are called *Spiritual Wickednesses in High Places*, with whom we must wrestle: So the good Angels hold the Devil, and all his Confederate Spirits, for their Adversaries; and they fight and wrestle with them, and strive to bring to nought their malicious Plots and Endeavours against those, with whom they have a Friendship. This is the Scripture Notion of the thing in hand; and this Patronage and Help against the Devil, they vouchsafe, we read; not only to particular Men, but to whole Countries.

If I prove the last, which is most dubious, you will not question the first, which is included in the other. Read then *Daniel 10*, and there you shall find, that an Angel appearing to him, told him, he had been contending a great while with the Prince of the Kingdom of *Persia*; that is, with that mighty Angel which abetted the *Persian* Interest against the *Israelites*. And

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*1st Michael, one of the chief Princes, or the first of the Princes, or greatest Angels, came to help me, v. 13. to lend him his Assistance, that he might not only resist the other, but overcome him, by the help of the most Powerful Prince in the Heavenly Host. And therefore he saith, ver. 20. being thus reinforced, that he would return and fight with the Prince of Persia, whom hitherto, it seems, he could not prevail against. And he tells him expressly in the next Words, ver. 21. that Michael was the Prince of the Jewish Nation (or had the Protection of their Affairs) who took part with him, and help'd him against their Adversary Angel. From this Place it is, that the Jews have entertained a constant Opinion, First, That every Country hath a several great and potent Angel presiding over it and defending it: In which St. Basil, and others, agrees with them, who calls such an Angel, who is superior (he saith) to them who take Care of particular Persons, ἑταίρος ἀγγέλων, a Nation-ruling Angel, one of that Power among the Heavenly Host, that a Basban, or Vizier is on Earth. And he proves there are such, from this Place of Daniel, and from that of Joshua 5, last; where one called the Captain of the Lord's Host, bids Joshua understand that he stood upon holy Ground. And, Secondly, they conclude, that till this Angel, and those under his Command, be overcome or goes away, there is no prevailing against that Nation. Therefore they say, that when God overthrew Pharaoh and his People in the Red Sea, there came down so many*  
 Thousand



Thousand Angels as there were *Egyptians*, because no Man can be overcome till his Angel be overcome, and his *Shadow* (as they speak) depart away from him. And they have a Proverb to this purpose, That the Militia or Soldiery on Earth cannot be humbled, till the Heavenly Militia or Host be humbled. The first Prince of which Host they conclude (which is their *Third Opinion*) viz. *Michael*, was their protecting Angel, *שר שר אלהים* the Prince, or Captain-General of *Israel*, who defended that Church as long as it was good, and opposed the Designs of the Devil, who stirred up *Persecution* against them. Theodore Quest. in Numeros xli.

And in the same Manner this *Michael*, the first of the Princes of the Celestial Host, and the Angels under his Command, are represented in the Book of the *Revelation* (as you find in the Epistle for this Day, *Rev. 12. 7.*) as fighting for the Christian Church, against the Devil and all his Ministers. *There was War in Heaven, Michael and his Angels fought against the Dragon; and the Dragon fought and his Angels, and prevailed not, neither was there Place found any more in Heaven:* That is, *Michael* defeated all his cruel Plots and bloody Enterprises, for the Destruction of Christian People by the Tyranny of the *Roman Emperors*, whom this inveterate Enemy of true Piety instigated against them. So that it seems by this, if we compare it with what we read in the Book of *Daniel*, that since the *Jews*, who were once a People dear to God, are fall'n off from him and rejected by

by him, this high Angel (*Michael*) who was their Protector and Guardian, hath left and abandoned them, and by the Disposal of Almighty God, betaken himself to the Service of Christian People, who are now the Church of God, and the true Seed of *Abraham*. And this, it is possible, might be the Meaning of that which *Josephus* relates, that before the Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, by *Titus*, a Voice was heard coming out of the Holy Place (where God is said to dwell) saying, *Quia Calve percutit eam, Let us pray from hence.* We may look upon it, I say, as the Voice of this Guardian Angel of theirs, crying to the rest of his Company (who were wont with him to minister before God) to forsake that Place and People, of whom they had taken Care as long as there was any hope to reduce them to the Obedience of the Lord Christ. But I propound that only as a probable Conjecture, because I have not the Warrant of the Holy Scripture for it. Yet it is very agreeable to the Book of God, which tells us how watchful the Angels of God are, not only over particular Persons, but whole Societies of Men, till they be utterly rejected of God: And then these Ministers also of his desert them, and deliver them up to *Satan*, that is, to the greatest Miseries that he can procure them.

But let us leave that, and consider in the Second Place, how the Angels preserve the Faithful from the Malice of Evil Men. For the Devil hath more Servants than those that are in the

the Air ; he hath a great many Agents here on Earth ; for he *works*, saith the Apostle, *in the Children of Disobedience*. These hate the Good, and often have mischievous Designs upon them, from which, by his holy Angels, God rescues and delivers them. This he hath done several Ways ; for we find in the Book of God, that sometimes the Angels of the Lord have had Commission to cut off spiteful and cruel Men, in the midst of their Enterprizes. They are the Executioners of God's Judgments and Decrees upon them ; according to what we read of the Angels smiting the whole Host of *Senacherib*, as it lay encamped against *Jerusalem* ; that is, as the *Hebrews* interpret it, he smote them with a sudden Pestilence, which cut off the Thread of their Lives in a Moment. And thus the Angel of the Lord smote *Herod*, who we find was no Friend to the Christians, but had already killed *James*, and was ready to do as much to another of our Lord's Ministers, *Acts* 12. 13. Sometime an Angel hath come and taken good Men out of the Hand of their Enemies, when they had them in their Power, and were ready to execute their Anger upon them. Thus you read in the same Chapter, that an Angel of the Lord delivered *St. Peter* out of the Hand of *Herod*, and from all the Expectation of the People of the *Jews*, who thought to see him the next Day upon the Scaffold, *v.* 6. and 11. compared together. And sometime by other Means, too long now to be remembred, either suggesting things to them, or presenting such Occasions as shall divert them from



from a Plot that lies in Ambush for them. For you must know that this is done sometimes invisibly, by a secret and undiscernible Ministry; and sometimes by a visible Appearance, as in the Case now mentioned. I know it will be said, that the Deliverance of *St. Peter* was an extraordinary thing, and that in these latter times there are no Instances of the like, which should make us believe such Protection of the Angels is still continued. But I think there is good Authority to assert the contrary; that though it be an extraordinary thing, yet sometimes in these later Ages of the World, God hath delivered good Men by a visible Ministry of Angels; which may dispose us to think he still grants us the Benefit of their Protection and Assistance, though we do not see it. For Proof of it, I think it not amiss to relate what I find recorded by *Melancthon*, on his own Knowledge; who was not only a good, humble, and meek Person, but of great Discretion and much applauded for the singular Accuracy of his Judgment. And I shall the rather relate it, because it shews the Care of God over those pious Reformers, who intended nothing (however some evil Spirits arose that troubled the Business) but the reducing of the State of Christianity to its ancient Purity and Simplicity. 'I could tell, saith he, in his Commentary upon *Dan. 10.* many certain Stories concerning 'honest Men, and worthy to be credited, who 'have been preserved in a wonderful Way by 'God: But I shall content my self with one, 'in which I can speak upon my own Knowledge, 'concerning

concerning *Simon Grynaeus*, a grave, learned,  
 and pious Divine (much celebrated, I may add,  
 by *Erasmus* in several of his Epistles.) This  
 Man being at the great Assembly at *Spire*,  
 1529, together with *Melancthon*, about the  
 composing of Differences in Religion, and hear-  
 ing the Bishop of *Vienna* deliver many gross  
 things in a Sermon which he preached, follow-  
 ed him out of the Church; and after he had  
 reverently saluted him, told him, that not out  
 of any wanton or arrogant Humour, but with  
 a good Mind he desired to speak with him, about  
 something which he had heard him utter for  
 Christian Doctrine; protesting, that it grieved  
 him very much, to hear a Person of his Parts  
 and Authority speak things so absurd and con-  
 tumelious against God. The Bishop heard him  
 kindly, and pretending then he was not at  
 leisure, invited him to come the next Day and  
 discourse with him, showing him the Place  
 where he lodged. *Grynaeus* came immediately  
 to *Melancthon*, and was scarce sat down to eat,  
 and relate part of his Discourse with the Bi-  
 shop, but one called for *Melancthon* to speak  
 with a Person that asked for him at the Door;  
 so he went out of the Room, and there found  
 a grave old Man, who assured him, that Ser-  
 jeants were coming from the King to arrest  
*Grynaeus*, and carry him to Prison; and that  
 he could not escape, unless he instantly avoid-  
 ed that Place; and he bid him make no Delay,  
 but believe his Words. So they immediately  
 carried *Grynaeus* over the *Rhine*, and coming  
 back

back to their Inn, they found that the Officers had been there to apprehend him, and that they came presently after they were got out of the House; which being certainly true, he could not but look upon this as a divine Preservation, for he could never learn who that Person was that came to him; and such was the speed of the Serjeants to lay hold on him, *ut nisi ab Angelis tectus fuisset Grynaeus evadere non potuisset*, that unless the good old Man Grynaeus had been protected and covered by Angels, he could never have escaped that Danger. This Story from so prudent and cautious a Person, as *Melancthon* appears to be in his Writings and Actions, is methinks a great Instance of the Truth of what is related in the Scripture Story, and a Confirmation of our Belief, that God doth some way or other take care of them that fear him, especially of them that do him eminent Service in the World, to defend them from the violence of Men, and their secret Contrivances, which can be known to none but himself. But,

3. Besides both these, there are other hurtful Things that might frequently indanger us, were it not for the custody of Gods holy Angels: When we walk abroad, when we ride, nay, when we sit or lie down in our own Houses, many Things might destroy us, were we not under this Guard. How often have we seen an House fall, or some such perillous Thing happen, from which Men could not have been delivered, had they gone one Minute later from that



# S E R M O N XVI. 465

that Place, or one Minute sooner to it? How often have Men been led contrary to their Intentions unto, or from a Place, from whence or whether if they had not turned, some Loss or Danger had betided them? For which I must refer you to your own Observation and Experience, commending that memorable Passage in the Psalmist to your Meditation, *Psal. 107. 43. Who-so is wise, and will observe these Things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* They will acknowledge the Truth of what is said; *Psal. 122. 7, 8. The Lord shall preserve thee from all Evil, he shall preserve thy Soul: The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, even for evermore.* And how he preserves us, we find in another Place of the same Book, *91. 11. He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy Ways; they shall bear thee up in their Hands, lest thou dash thy Foot against a Stone,* i. e. he saves and delivers us from many noxious and mischievous Accidents to which we are exposed by the Ministry of his holy Angels, who watch over us to do us friendly Offices in time of need.

All these, nor all the rest which I have still to say, will not warrant us to give them any divine Worship, to make our Prayers or Addresses to them, to vow our selves to their Service, or to render them our Thanks; because they are but Gods Ministers and Servants, (as I shall show you in the Afternoon's Discourse) to whom we ought to pay our Acknowledgments: And in-

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deed this Doctrine ought very much to excite our Praises to God, who imployes and orders them to do these good Offices for us; and it ought to make us live the more contentedly and chearfully in any Condition; since these glorious Creatures, as I have told you, are our Companions, and never disdain to wait upon us in the most homely Dwelling, as much as in the most princely Pallace; nay are then, we have reason to think, most careful of us, when we are in the greatest Distress.

And that now, I must tell you, is the Reason why Christians have, for a long time, observed this Festival, in the Ages that are past before us: That they might acknowledge the Divine Providence, and his fatherly Care over his Church by the Service of Angels: And I suppose it is therefore called by the Name of *Michael and all Angels*, because he and that part of the heavenly Host which is under his Government, are justly thought, from that Passage I mentioned in the *Revelation*, to be the Protectors of Christian People, as heretofore of the *Israel* of God. As we take therefore several times to meditate upon several Passages of God's Love and Kindness towards us, because we cannot think of all at once, or must run them over very lightly, and insist long upon none of them: So on this Day Christians have used to remember the great Goodness of God in creating Angels, and his Mercy in appointing them to such Ministries for our Welfare, and putting them all under the Power and Government of our blessed Lord and Saviour; who



# SERMON XVI. 467

who, as St. Peter saith, is gone into the Heavens; and is on the right Hand of God, Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made subject to him. This Account, I find the first Protestants gave of it (who were far from looking upon this Festival as a Popish Institution) I mean, those who followed the Reformation of Luther. For Sebastian Froscelius hapning to write his Epistle Dedicatory before Melancthon's Commentaries on the Gospel of St. Matthew, upon this Day, concludes it in this manner; Dated at Wittenberg the 29th of September, on which the Church gives thanks to God the Creator of all, *quod creavit castos Angelos*, &c. that he hath made the chaste and holy Angels, and would have them to be Ministring Spirits, and take the Custody of the Church and all Peoples Minds, and to be *depulsores obscænorum*, &c. the drivers away of all obscene, cruel and lying Spirits, who seek our Hurt and Damage.

And that is the Thing to which I would now stir you up; in a Belief of these Things, that there are Spirits good and bad, and that Almighty God is pleased to appoint the one to do as much good, as the other seek to do us harm, humbly and gratefully to acknowledge his Goodness, and to render, not only now, but continually, the Sacrifice of Praise, giving thanks to his Name.

Let us praise him, that we are not perpetually haunted with evil Spirits; that our rest Night and Day is not disturbed by these invisible and vigilant Enemies, who envy our Quiet and Re-



## 468      S E R M O N    XVI.

pose; that he doth not suffer them to trouble our Peace, and embitter all our Comforts and Contents to us; that our Houses are not pestered with these unruly Creatures; that our Sleep is not terrify'd with Dreams, and our Fancies molested with the Apparitions of the Night; that he keeps our Eyes from Tears, and our Feet from falling; that we are not made like *Job*, and one Messenger after another doth not come to bring us Tidings of the Mischiefs that these Maligners of our Happiness, should God permit them, would continually procure us.

Let us praise him, that he hath preserved us from so many Dangers, that he hath carried us from our Infancy through an innumerable Company of Hazards to which we are exposed; that our Bones are not broken, that our Eyes are not put out; that our Habitations are not oftner on Fire, that our Children are not destroyed or bruised, or some way hurt or maimed by a numberless number of Things, which might in a trice make both them and us very miserable.

Yea, let us praise him for the Ministry of his Angels in all Ages of the World; that by their Ministration he hath made so many Declarations of his good Will to good Men of old; that he hath sent them to give notice of the appearing of our Saviour, and to secure him in his Infancy from the subtilty and flattering Malice of *Herod*; that he employed them to give notice of his Resurrection, and to assure his Disciples of his Ascension to Heaven, and that they so many ways preserved the holy Apostles in their Work  
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of preaching the Gospel, and carrying it all over the World, notwithstanding the Opposition of Men and Devils, out of whose Hands they were rescued and saved, till they had finished their Course with Joy. Saint Paul saith, *I was delivered out of the Mouth of the Lion, and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil Work, (which Men, that is, contrive against me) and will preserve me to his heavenly Kingdom,* 2 Tim. 4. 17.

And this seems to be the meaning of that remarkable Place, Rev. 14. 6. where St. John saith he saw another Angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the Earth, and to every Nation, and Kindred, and Tongue, and People, &c. He beheld, that is, the Divine Providence, taking care that every Corner of the World should be filled with the Sound of those glad Tidings which were at first published by our Saviour as the everlasting Will of God, and that by the Ministry of Angels, who were a Guard and Defence to the Apostles, (the prime Ministers of Christ here on Earth,) and suffered not their Enemies to kill them, till they had fulfilled their Ministry; but delivered them out of Prisons, cut off their Enemies, cast out the old Serpent called the *Devil and Satan, which deceived the Nations*, making all the Church cry out when they saw his Downfal, and all his Angels cast out with him, Rev. 12. 10. *Now is come Salvation and Strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Christ; for*

*the accuser of our Brethren is cast down, &c.* that is, the Apostles by the help of Christ and his Angels, rooted the Devil and all Idolatrous Worship; they brought the Kingdoms of the Earth in Obedience to our Lord, and confuted by their admirable Patience all the false Suggestions and Accusations of the Devil and his Agents, as if they were the troublers of the World, and the disturbers of the Peace of Kings and Princes.

For when they could do our Lord no more Service by their Lives, then they fought for him by their meek and lamb-like Death, and overcame as much that way, as any other. So it follows *ver. 11. And they overcame him (i. e. the Devil) by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of their Testimony, and they loved not their Lives unto the Death*; that is, as Christ their Saviour spoiled Principalities and Powers upon his Cross, and never broke the Strength of the Devil more than when he dyed; even so did his Servants afterward, who like the mighty *Samson*, destroyed their Enemies by their Death, as much as they had done in the time of their Life.

And I must tell you for a Conclusion, that we Christians have the greater reason to thank God for this Ministry of holy Angels, because they are the chief and principal of those glorious Creatures, which he hath assigned to take Care of our Security. So much is here intimated in my Text, the whole Import of which I have not yet fully told you.

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The *Hebrews* unanimously consent in this, that there are several Orders of Angels, some much Superior to the other, (as I have already intimated;) and the Scripture very much countenances that Notion, as well as common Reason. They are called, you know, the Host of God; and we continually praise and acknowledge him (in the *Te Deum*) as the most holy Lord God of *Sabbath*, i. e. of Hosts: Two Sorts of which Hosts, and no more, are mentioned in the sacred Books, the Sun, Moon, and Stars; and these more bright and glorious Creatures, the Angelical Ministers. These are the Hosts of Heaven, and whereas both the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, and likewise these Celestial Spirits have been Worshipped as if they were Gods; we acknowledge that our God is the Lord of both these *Sabbath* (so the *Hebrew* Word is which we still retain) or Hosts, to whom alone we pay divine Worship and Honour.

Now, as there are in the visible Host of Heaven, a greater Light to rule the Day, and another (brighter than the Stars, though less than the Sun) to rule the Night, whence the Moon is called the *Queen of Heaven*, *Jer.* 44. 17. and the Sun is called by the Heathens *Baal*, the Lord or King of Heaven: So in these other invisible Hosts or Armies of God, there are some that are called *Princes of the Host*, and *Captains of the Lords Host*, as you heard before, *Dan.* 10. *Josh.* 5. They are all his Ministers, but some of them are called the *Angels of his Presence*, or as the *Hebrews* speak, of his Face. Now where the

*Hebrews* meet with that Phrase, they, not without Reason, understand it to signifie some great Angel nearer to God, and much excelling others in Dignity, Power, and Strength; for as in the Court of a great King, there are many Officers that attend upon several Charges; but yet all are not wont to be admitted into the Presence, where the chief and principal Persons only appear, who hold the highest Dignities and Employments: So in imitation of Things here below, when the Scripture would express an Angel of high Degree, it calls him an *Angel of his Presence*, Isa. 63. 9. or of his *Face*, which according to the Use in the Courts of Princes, cannot signifie an ordinary Minister, but one of a nobler Quality; who (as we say) is immediately about his Person, and sits in Council with him; and therefore when God saith to *Moses* in *Exod.* 33. 14. *My Presence or Face shall go with thee*, the meaning is, that he would not send a common Angel (as he had said before, *ver.* 2.) but a very powerful Angel, one of the highest Ministers to assist them, and bring them unto Rest. Conformable to which, we find the Stile of the New Testament (which was written by the Converts of the *Hebrew Nation*) as you may read in *Luke* 1. 19. where the Angel that appeared to *Zacharias* in the Temple, saith, *I am Gabriel, that stand in the Presence of God*, i. e. one of the highest Order of Angels, and principal Minister in the heavenly Court, who am employed on this Message to thee. The same prime Minister is sent afterward to the Mother of our Lord,



# S E R M O N XVI.

473

Lord, (*ver. 26.*) to give notice of his Birth; at which you find with this *Angel* (as I suppose) *a multitude of an heavenly Host, 11. 13. i. e.* all those under the Command of this Prince of the Host, *praising God, and saying, Glory be to God in the highest.*

This therefore I conceive is intimated in the words of my Text, when it saith, the Angels of Christ's Disciples *beheld Gods face*, that we are under the Favour and Protection of the highest Rank of Angels, God hath assigned us the strongest Guard. Those Angels who have a multitude of the heavenly Host under them, take charge of the Body of Christ, even of the meanest and weakest Member of it. The chief is *Michael*, but there are others, as you shall see before I have done with this Argument, who attend upon the Affairs of the Church, and are ready to do us Good, that are of the highest Dignity in the heavenly Quire.

We have reason therefore to praise him, because he hath placed the lowest of us in the same Degree with *David*, who saith, *my help cometh from the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth, Psal. 121. 2.* In the *Hebrew* it is, *my help cometh from before the Lord, i. e.* from his mighty Angels which stand before him, and behold his Face, whereby he helps and delivers me. The high praises of God ought to be in our Mouths, who are so esteemed by the King of Heaven. Instead of our Complaints and Lamentations, this one single Meditation would administer abundant matter of Praise and Thanksgiving, if

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we laid it to Heart. We should never be able to find any time wherein we may not rejoice, because, saith our Saviour, *they always behold the Face of my Father*, and are continually watchful to bring in Blessings to us. All that is within us ought to bless his holy Name, and we should bless the Lord (as the *Psalms* speak elsewhere, 34. 1.) *at all times; his praise should be continually in our Mouths*, who hath appointed his most excellent Ministers to wait upon us, and secure our Happiness.

We know the Esteem that a great Man sets upon any Person, by the quality of the Messenger that he sends upon any occasion to him; and so hereby our Saviour would make us understand, how much his Father values and prizes those who believe on him, and are his faithful Disciples, in that those Angels are theirs which behold his *face* in Heaven, and are nearest to his glorious Majesty: But we are unworthy of this Esteem, and may well forfeit it, if we set not a great Price upon this Loving-kindness of God, and do not duly value it; which we should express by our constant and hearty Praises, and especially by a sincere Study of all Piety, which is the best Expression of our Thankfulness, and will most especially endear us to him, and to his holy Angels.

THE



SERMON XVII.  
BEING THE  
Second SERMON  
ON  
*Michaelmas-Day, 1672.*



MATTH. XVIII. 10.

---For I say unto you, that in Heaven their  
Angels do always behold the Face of my Fa-  
ther which is in Heaven.



IN this Day, as I have already told  
you, the Church of Christ hath been  
wont to commemorate the great Mer-  
cy of God in the Ministry of Angels;  
the greatest of which he hath given  
a Charge unto, that they shall take Care of us,  
and do us Offices of Love and Kindness. There-  
fore in the Rituals of the Eastern Church, it is  
called

# 476 SERMON XVII.

called *συναξὶς τῶν παμμεγίστων ταξιαρχῶν, &c.* the Solemn Festival of the very greatest Leaders, or Commanders of the Host above, *Michael* and *Gabriel*, and all the Heavenly Powers; or, as others have it, the Solemnity of the Prince of the Heavenly Militia, *Michael*, and the rest of the incorporeal Powers.

Now according to the old Saying, that *διπλῆς ὁ ἄνθρωπος*, *Man is double, there being an outward and an inward Man*, the good Offices which they do us are of two sorts, either relating to our Bodies or to our Souls. Of the first I have already discoursed, and shown how they are in the Nature of a Guard to us, especially to those that are good, according to that of the *Psalmist*, 34. 7.

I come now to treat of the latter, concerning the Good they do to our Souls; which, as the principal part of Men, so, one would think, should be the principal part of their Care. And thus *St. Hierome*, upon these Words, cries out, as I intimated in the Morning, *Magna est dignitas Animarum, &c.* Great is the Dignity of Souls, who from their Nativity have an heavenly Minister assigned to them for their Custody. It must be confessed, that this is more obscurely spoken of than the other; yet something there is that they contribute to our Spiritual Welfare, as may be made manifest by their Opposites, the Devil and all those Spiritual Wickednesses that follow him. Their great Enmity is to Mens Souls; they study nothing more than to carry them to Perdition: And therefore we may conclude,



## S E R M O N XVII. 477

clude, that these good Angels are the Friends and Lovers of Mens Souls, which are in Worth and Dignity next to themselves, and study their Preservation or Deliverance from the Power of the Evil One.

It is an hard Matter, I know, to assign the Manner and Way how they convey their Spiritual Assistance to us; but I shall shew you plainly there is Cause to believe the Thing. And I know not how to illustrate it better, than by considering what Hurt is said to be done to us by our Adversary the Devil; whereby we may understand what Service these Blessed Spirits do us, who are Adversaries to him, and Helpers of us.

Now we meet with these two Characters of the Devil in holy Writ, that he is a *Murderer*, and that he is a *Lyar*. As he is a Murderer, seeking the Destruction of Men, he doth all the Mischief he can both to Mens Bodies and to their Minds. As he is a Lyar, he seeks only to deceive, abuse, and destroy the Mind. For the Hurt that this Murderer doth to their Bodies, it is either in Mens private Capacities, by troubling the Air, bringing Diseases and Infections, when God permits him, raising Storms and Tempests, and such like things: Or in their publick Capacity, stirring up the Spirit of ambitious, haughty, covetous, and cruel Men to oppress and enslave others; to make unnecessary Wars, to fill the World with Rapine, Slaughter and Blood; to overturn Kingdoms, and indeed to turn the World upside down. Then for their Minds, he doth them

## 478      S E R M O N    XVII.

them no small Prejudice, even by these Wars and Tumults, in which one Sin is wont to follow upon the Neck of another. And besides we may conceive, that he instigates Men to all sorts of Villanies, according as he finds them inclined. He inflames their brutish Desires; he pricks forward their Pride, and Love of Dominion; he stimulates their Revenge; he heightens their Choler and Rage, and works upon all their other Passions: So that he is the Furtherer of Adulteries, Fornications, nay, and of all unnatural Filthiness; the great Provoker to Murders, Thefts, Robberies, Violence, Deceit, Fraud, and all other Wickedness; that, if it were possible, there might be a Hell above Ground, and he might be the God of this World.

Then, for the other thing, as he is a *Liar*, his Business is to cheat and delude Mens Minds with false Opinions; to propagate all the foolish Conceits, and the lewdest Doctrines that he can invent; to lead Men to *Epicurism* and Atheistical Conclusions, or else to abuse and gull their Minds with Fancies and vain Dreams, which they shall glory in as the very Revelation of Almighty God.

From all which I think we may safely draw this Inference, That as the Devil and his Partakers seek whom, in this manner, they may devour; so the holy Angels seek how they may save and deliver Men from these Mischiefs. And as I have shewn you that they are the Preservers of Mens Bodies, so I shall now make it appear, that they are Instruments of Good to our Souls:

Because



Because they love their Welfare; and they are the Lovers of Truth and Piety, and seek the Promotion of the Faith of Jesus Christ in Sincerity. This is one great Commendation which St. Peter gives of the Gospel Revelation, that *the Angels desire to look into these things*, 1 Pet. 1. 12. And St. Paul saith, it hath pleased God to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, Ephes. 1. 10. To make us all, that is, but one Society, under one supreme Governour the Lord's Christ. They being therefore so much concerned in our Affairs, as to be great Admirers of the Christian Wisdom, and the wonderful Contrivance of God and our Saviour, for the restoring of Mankind to their Happiness; you may be sure will take delight to give all the Assistance they can for the Maintenance, and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Christian Religion; and of all those who are the hearty Professors of it. Nay, more than this, since such is the wonderful OEconomy or Dispensation of Christianity, that God hath united all things in our Saviour, and made Heaven and Earth to meet together in him; that Angels and Christians are of the same Corporation, and these Heavenly Creatures are the Subjects of Jesus as well as we; there can be no doubt, but that they will take Care of those, who are, in some sort, their Fellow-Members of the same Body, knit together under one and the same Head, our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus.

To



To declare this a little more particularly, we may safely conclude, I think, in the first Place,

I. That the holy Angels do all they can to preserve well-disposed Minds from the Illusions of Evil Spirits; to keep them, I mean, from being abused with false Inspirations of vain and haughty Enthusiasts; to preserve in them a sober Understanding of Things, and deliver them from the Impostures of an hot Imagination: And, more than this, I make no question it is their Endeavour to seek Occasions, how to put good Thoughts into our Minds, to further all pious Inclinations, to instigate us to that which is truly good, and to promote a sober Life and holy Conversation in the Christian World.

How they do this, we are not bound to give an account; and indeed we know no more of it, than we do how the Devil suggests bad things to Mens Minds, and troubles their Understandings, and how he stirs up their Passions and Affections to that which is hurtful to them. But if we grant him to have a Power to do that, which is the common Sense of Mankind, there is no Reason but we should allow these better Spirits to do the other, since they cannot have less Ability to promote that which is good, than the Devil hath to advance that which is bad. And thus I am sure the Ancients understood it, and were went from hence to aggravate the Sins of Men, that they do wickedly not only against their own Reason, but against the Suggestions and Impressions of good Spirits, who join with them to stop  
their

# S E R M O N XVII. 481

their Proceedings in evil Courses. They forbid and check them in their Motions, and hold them in *ὡς περ πσι χαλινοῖς*, as with certain Bits and Bittles, saith *Arethas*, whereby they seek to restrain their forward Pro-  
In Apocalyp. 2. 776.  
 pensions to sin, and to with-hold them

*ἀπο τῶν ὁμιλιῶν ἀρετῶν*, from Actions that are hateful to God; all which they must break in Pieces before they be able to undo themselves.

Nor is the Holy Scripture a Stranger to this Notion, as I think it's manifest from one Place, which I shall oppose to the greatest Objections that can be made against this Discourse. It is commonly said, that the Holy Ghost doth all those things for us which I have now mentioned. For why hath our Saviour bid us ask the Spirit of God, which he hath promised to send, if it be not to inspire our Minds, and touch our Hearts with pious Inclinations to that which is Good? To which I reply, that there is no good Christian who doubts of this; but it doth not in the least contradict that which I am now about to prove, as is apparent enough, if Men did not study to obscure the plain Words of the Holy Scripture by their unskilful Glosses upon it. For that the Holy Ghost gives us many of its Assistances and Succours, by the Ministry and Service of the holy Angels, read but the fourth and fifth Verses of the first Chapter of the *Revelation* to *St. John*, and I think it will leave no Doubt in your Minds of it. There that beloved Apostle wishes *Grace and Peace* to the seven Churches of *Asia*, from him which is, and which was, and

*which is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before the Throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the First-begotten from the Dead.* In which Words the Name of the Holy Ghost is not mention'd; but instead of that, the Seven Spirits that are before the Throne of the Divine Majesty, are joined together with God the Father, (who is describ'd in those Words, *which is, which was, and is to come*, as the eternal Lord of all) and with God the Son, our blessed Saviour (who died to assure us of God's Love, and rose again that he may be able to bless us with eternal Life) in the Communication of *Grace and Peace* to Christian People. Of which the clearest and most satisfactory Account that can be given, it seems to me, is this, That those Seven Spirits before the Throne, (*i. e.* the high Angels of Heaven) are employed by the Divine Appointment to be the Ministers and Conveyers of Spiritual Blessings to us from the Holy Ghost the Comforter: He teaches us, I say, how that Divine Spirit, which, now that our Lord is in Heaven, governs his Church, bestows its Favours upon us; and particularly instructed him to know things to come, *viz.* by the Service of Angels, and of the highest Angels, as I told you in the Morning.

The very same Account I find *Athanasius* gives us of those Words of *St. Paul*, *1 Tim. 5. 21.* where in his Charge to *Timothy* he puts the *Elect Angels* after God and our Saviour Christ. *Timothy* knew well enough, saith that Author, how all is communicated and derived to us from

God



# S E R M O N   X V I I .   483

God and our Lord Jesus, through the Holy Ghost; but he would have him remember also, that the Angels are Instruments by whom he gives us his Blessings. He would have him know, as his Words are, that they minister to us, and take Care of what belongs to our

Affairs, *ἐπισκοποῦντες τὰς ἐν ἡμῶν πράξεις* Epist. ad Serap. p. 189.

overseeing every Man's Actions, and rendering an Account of them to their Lord and Master. Agreeable to which it is, that

St. John is said to be in the *Spirit on the Lord's Day*, ver. 10. The Meaning of which, if you

would know, look through the whole Book of the *Revelation*, and you will soon find, that our

Saviour by his Divine Spirit making known to him things to come, they were all represented in

Visions by the Ministry of Angels. And further you may observe, that our Saviour appearing to

him (*Chap. 5. Ver. 6.*) as the *Lamb of God* that had been slain, he saw him have *seven Horns*

and *seven Eyes*, which are expressly said to be the *seven Spirits* of God, sent forth into all the

Earth: That is, our Lord Christ presented himself as having all the Angels, even the highest of

them, at his Command; which Angels being of great Power, (expressed by Horns) and of great

Knowledge, Wisdom and Care, (expressed by Eyes) he sends forth to look after the Security

and Welfare of all his faithful Disciples.

It seems then by this Place, that we are to conceive, some part at least, of the Help and

Comfort of the Holy Ghost, to be given us by the Angels of God, who are employed for that

purpose in all the Earth. Which Phrase tells us, that this is performed by the Ministry of the sublimest Angels, as I have often said, who are of the greatest Perspicacity, Wisdom, and Foresight, and have a Power and Authority above all others, being the nearest in Place and Dignity to the Divine Majesty. For these Expressions of St. John are borrowed from the Visions of *Zachariah*, who saw (as you read *Chap. 4. 2, 3.*) a Golden Candlestick and seven Lamps in it (which were always, you know, burning in the Temple at *Jerusalem*) but knew not what they meant. And therefore the Angel, who made these Representations to him, tells him, *ver. 10.* that *these Seven were the Eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro, through the whole Earth;* that is, his Prime Ministers, that watchfully attend the Affairs of his whole Kingdom, as the chief Overseers of it. From whence you may note, for the illustrating all that hath been said, *First*, That the *Hebrews* have a Tradition, that there are Seven Principal Ministers in the Heavenly Court, before the Throne of God; some of whose Names are recorded in the holy Book, as *Michael*, the Prince of all, and *Gabriel*, another that stands in the Divine Presence. This Tradition is expressly mentioned in the Book of *Tobit*, *12. 15.* where *Raphael* (another of them according to the *Hebrews*) says, *I am one of the seven Angels which stand and minister before the holy blessed one.* And those Words, *Gen. 11. 7.* *Let us go down and confound their Language*, are thus paraphrased by the *Chaldee Interpreter*;  
 The



# S E R M O N XVII 485

*The Lord spake to the seven Angels which stand before him. Go to now, let us go down, &c.* Now the Temple of *Jerusalem* you may observe (*Secondly*) being God's House, where his Glory dwelt among them, the seven Lamps (which burnt continually in the golden Candlestick that had just so many Branches, before the Veil over against the Mercy-seat, which was God's Throne) were intended, in all Probability, to represent these seven Angelical Ministers, who are always in the Divine Presence, and wait upon him in the Heavenly Place to receive his Commands, being as quick as Fire or Lightning to execute his Will. And (*Thirdly*) that the Office of these principal Ministers is to serve as general Inspectors of this Universe of ours, whereas the lower Angels are assigned and limited only to certain Places; for he saith, these Seven run to and fro thro' the whole Earth. And (*Fourthly*) that these great Angels, during God's Presence among the *Jews*, had a peculiar Care of that Church, *Michael* the Prince of the Host being their Chief-tain, and particularly concerned for their Defence: The seven Lamps did not more constantly burn in the Holy Place, than these with all Expedition served the Will of God for their Good. And (*lastly*) that the Affairs of the Christian Church are now under the same mighty Power and Protection. Whilst other Kingdoms, Governments, and Provinces are committed to the Charge of subordinate Angels, the Body of Christ is peculiarly under the Care of the most glorious, who supervise all, but intend with a special



Watchfulness the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus. This is clear from what hath been said, and may be further illustrated from another Passage in the *Revelation*, 4. 5. where St. *John* saw in the Christian Church, as *Zachary* had heretofore seen in the *Jewish*, *Seven Lamps of Fire burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God*. And again, *Chap. 8. 2. he saw these seven Angels which stood before God, sounding to Battle against all the Enemies of the Church*. That is, as *Clemens of Alexandria* speaks, *ἑπτὰ πρωτόγονοι ἀγγέλοι*, *the seven first-born Angels, or the eldest Sons of Glory*, who have the greatest Power; and are represented in the following Parts of that Book, as executing the Anger of God upon all Opposers of Christianity, till they had pulled them down to the Ground; and the Multitude of Christian People thundered out *Hallelujah's*, saying, *The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth*, 19, 6.

Thus I have told you all that I can find at present concerning the first Particular, which is the principal; their helping us in the Knowledge of the Truth, and in our doing Good: The second is consequent to this; for,

II. The Ancient Christians look'd upon the Angels of God as Witnesses of their Actions; in Consideration whereof they were excited to do well, and to behave themselves with all due Caution and Circumspection before God. It's true, God is every where, and so we are to walk as in his Presence, and under his Eye and Observance.

servance. But to make us more sensible of this, and to bring things down to the meanest Capacity, the Divine Presence, according to the constant Style of the Holy Scripture, is signified to us by the Presence of Angels, who are his Attendants and Ministers; and therefore in the Place now mentioned, they are called *the Eyes of God*. Hence it is, that holy Men lookt upon themselves as under the Inspection of Angels, to whose Presence, as God's Ministers and Signifiers of his Presence, they ought to have a great Regard. This is the Sense of that Place, *Eccles. 5. 6.* where the wise Man cautions the *Israelites*, that when they had made a Vow they should not retract it, nor say *before the Angel*, that it was an Error. The Angel he look'd upon as the Overseer of their Words and Actions, and, if they did Evil, as the Avenger and Punisher of them. And thus the Heathens also speak, *Hic est prorsus Custos, singularis Praefectus, domesticus Speculator, &c.* He is thy Keeper, a singular Guide and Governour, a Domestick Observer, an individual and constant Disposer, an inseparable Witness, an Approver of good Actions, and a Disfallower of all that are bad. And this is the Style of the New Testament also, as you read in those Words cited before, *1 Tim. 5. 21. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things, &c.* As if he had said, the elect (*i. e.* the choice, and most eminent, and principal) Angels are Witnesses of what I say, and of all the Charge that is imposed on thee and undertaken by thee; they

will observe thy Behaviour and Demeanour in the Church of God, being as so

Lib. de Spirit. Sancto ad Amphiloeh. c. 13. many *παιδάζοντες ἡ παρονομαί, &c.* (to use St. Basil's Words) Tutors

and Governours set over Men by the Father of all; and accordingly they will accuse or acquit thee at that great Day of Reckoning. This seems also to be the Meaning of the same Apostle in another Place, 1 Cor. 11. 10. where he would have them to think, that Angels are present in their Sacred Assemblies; and so, out of Reverence to such great Ministers of his appointed to attend there, and by whom he was present, to be careful how they admitted of any thing undecent or immodest at those Meetings. And thus some have expounded those Words of our Saviour, ver. 20. of this eighteenth of St. Matthew, *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* The Angels, say they, are there by his Order, as Signs of his Presence, and the Witnesses of our Actions, and the Helpers of our Devotion at such Seasons. But as there is no need to interpret that Place in such Manner, so there is no need of it to justify this Truth (which is attested by others that I have named) how that they are present to observe, as well as assist us: *Nemini conspicui semper adsunt, omnium non modo actorum testes, verum etiam cogitatorum*: For though they are conspicuous to none, they are ever near to all, the Witnesses not only of our Actions, but even of



of our Thoughts. So far the Ancients ventured to proceed in this Discourse.

III. Who lookt upon them not only as Witnesses and Observers of our Actions, but as Assistants to us in our Combates; joining their Forces with us then, above all other times, to strengthen us against all Assaults of our Spiritual Enemies. As they prompt a Man to that which is good, so they stand by him, and are aiding to him, when he meets with Resistance in well-doing. There is none can doubt, as *Gregory Nyssen* speaks, but there is *Lib. de Vita Moisi.* *συμμαχία ἐκ Θεοῦ*, an auxiliary Force sent us from God, and bestowed upon our Nature, when we are devoted to Vertue. It attends upon us very early, but then appears most manifestly, when, being advanced in the Course of Christian Life, we encounter with greater and more powerful Opposition. And if you would know how this Help is afforded us, I will unfold, saith he, this Secret to you. There is *λόγος τις ἐκ πατέρων ἡμῶν*, a certain Discourse descended to us from the Tradition of our Fathers, *τὸ πρὸν ἔχον*, which carries in it Credibility, that speaks on this Manner; That our Nature lapsing into Sin, God did not pass us by, and overlook us with Neglect in this Condition, leaving us utterly unprovided of Help for our Recovery; but assigned a certain Angel, one of those Creatures that have no bodied Nature, to join himself to every Man's Life for his Assistance. And on the contrary, the Corrupter of  
of

# 490 SERMON XVII.

of Mankind did ἀντιμυχεῖσθαι, counterwork this gracious Design, and oppose his Endeavours on the other side, by sending one of his Evil and naughty Dæmons, to lead Men into Vice, and destroy them. So that Man being ἐν μέσῳ τῶν δύο, in the middle between two, who are directly bent one against the other, it is in his Power which shall be victorious. The Good shews him the Blessedness of Vertue, in regard of the Hope that is set before them who do worthily. The other entertains him with material Pleasures, from whence no Hope at all springs, but only a present, short, and visible Delight enslaves the Senses of foolish Men. Now if he estrange himself from these Allurements, and turn with his Thoughts to the better; if leaving, as it were, the Evil behind his Back, he set his Soul directly Face to Face over against that blessed Hope, as before a clear Glas, so that the Image of Divine Vertue be clearly reflected and formed in his Heart: τότε αὐτῷ ἢ τῷ ἀδελφῷ συμμαχία συναντᾷ καὶ συνίσταται, Immediately the Help and Assistance of his Brother comes to him, and manifestly succours him against his Enemy. Ἀδελφός γάρ τερόπον τίνα, &c. For an Angel is after a sort (as to the Rational and Intellectual Part) the Brother of the Soul of Man; who then appears and joins himself to him for his Relief, when he approaches to a Conflict with *Pharaoh*, his great and deadly Enemies. Thus he, who hath followed in great part the Sense of some great Philosophers; for *Plutarch* rejects the Opinion,

nion, I remember, of *Menander*, who said, every Man had an Assistant-Genius given him when he was born, who was <sup>L. mei Eo-  
δούλας.</sup> *μυσταγωγὸς τῷ βίῳ*, the Director of his Life, and saith, that *Empedocles* was nearer the Truth, who said there was *δύο τι νῆες*, a double Fate and Genius under whose Government Men were, whom they found struggling one with another.

And thus much seems to be declared to us in the Story of our Saviour's Passion, that the good are earnestly concerned for our seasonable Relief; for when he was in his terrible Agony in the Garden, an Angel we read *Luke 22. 43.* appeared to him from Heaven, strengthening him.

IV. But they go further, I observe, and add, that the Angels carry our Prayers to the Throne of Grace, as well as bring us Gods Blessings; they look upon them as the *vectores hinc precum, inde donorum*, Carriers of Prayers from hence, and Gifts from thence; which was the Doctrine of the *Platonists* expressed in those few Words by *Apuleius*. And so in that Place of *Tobit* before named, 12. 15. where *Raphael* saith, *I am one of the seven Angels that stand and minister before the holy blessed one*, i. e. God; the Greek reads, *οἱ μετὰ τὰς αἰνέσεις τῶν ἁγίων, &c.* who present the Prayers of the Saints, and go in and out before the glory of the holy One. *Origen* saith the same, who was a Follower of the *Platonical* Opinions, that they do ἀναβαίνειν go up with Mens Prayers and Supplications, and κατὰβαίνειν



*Angeli eorum* come down from thence to con-  
 veigh those Benefits which God thinks us wor-  
 thy of. A great many other of the *Greek* Chri-  
 stians deliver their Sense to the same Purpose,  
 whom I shall not trouble you withal, but only  
 mention St. *Augustine* among the *Latines*, who  
 explains it thus. That they do not minister in  
 this Affair, as if they went to tell God any  
 Thing which he knew not before; but they con-  
 sult his Will about those Things which we pray  
 for, and that which he commands either evident-  
 ly or secretly, they convey to us. But to speak  
 more clearly to every one's Satisfaction, that  
 which I suppose they meant hereby was, that  
 the Angels being present in Christian Assemblies,  
 made their Petitions likewise to God for those  
 Things which they heard pious Men pray for.  
 This we may think is one of the Helps which  
 they afford us, to assist us with their Prayers;  
 which carries indeed a great probability in it,  
 though we have no expresse word of Scripture  
 for it, and so must leave it only as a pious Opi-  
 nion: But I find the first Protestants well enough  
 satisfied with it; for they are the expresse Words  
 of *Melancthon* in one of his Books, and he  
 makes it the Sense of my Text: *Orant*  
 Tom. 3. P. 242. *pro Ecclesia, juxta illud, Angeli eorum*  
*vident faciem patris mei; They pray for*  
*the Church according to that, their Angels be-*  
*hold the Face of my Father;* and so I find a  
 good Writer of our own explaining these Words  
 to this Purpose. Take heed how you offend  
 these little Ones, for their Angels may at any  
 time

## S E R M O N XVII. 493

time come before God, and present their Requests to him on their behalf. They have liberty always to represent their Grievances, and prefer their Petitions to him for his Help and Succour, to be sent to those whom they watch over: Prayer you know in the holy Language, is called the *seeking of Gods Face, and looking up to him*. Upon which Account, the beholding of his Face here in my Text, may without wresting the Words, be expounded concerning their praying for us, and desiring good Things to be granted to us.

But I have nothing for certain to affirm of this Matter; let me only desire you to observe a Thing which it is seasonable here to add: That should we grant they pray for us, yet it doth not follow that it is lawful for us to pray to them, and beseech them to pray for us, we may not address our Devotions to them, that they would be our Mediators and Intercessors with God, as the *Romish Church* now doth. It is very probable, that from what the Scripture saith concerning the Angels being present in Christian Assemblies, and from this pious Opinion that they are so charitable as to second our Prayers with their own; some indiscreet and forward People took occasion to invoke them, and pray to them to be their Intercessors with the Divine Majesty; which rash, and ungrounded piece of Devotion, seems to have sprung up very early among some Professors of Christianity; for *St. Paul* warns the *Colossians* that they should use due Care, least any Man beguiled them of  
their

their Reward, by a *voluntary Humility and Worshipping of Angels*, intruding into those Things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his *fleshly Mind*, as you read *Chap. 11. 18.* There was a great pretence of Humility in it, as there is still among the Papists; they thought it was too much boldness to approach to God, nay, to our blessed Saviour immediately, though God hath appointed him to be the only Mediator, and therefore in great Lowliness, as it seemed, they would take the Angels in their way, and by them have their Petitions addressed to our Lord Christ. But the Apostle plainly tells them, that these Men who made shew of such Humility, and look'd as if they durst not be too bold, were indeed proud and confident Men, a great deal more bold than they ought to have been, intruding into Things that they had no knowledge of, and devising a Religion of their own, as not content with what God had revealed. And thus the Christian Church ever after in the best Times, condemned this worshipping of Angels from this Place of *St. Paul*, for it still continued among some superstitious People. The Council of *Laodicea* made an express Canon against it; and *Theodore* saith, that it was a leaving or forsaking of our Lord Jesus Christ. And *Irenaeus* before him said, that the Church throughout the World receiving divers Benefits from God, renders Acknowledgments in the Name of Christ, not using the Invocation of Angels, but purely, clearly, and holily directing their Prayers to the Lord of all, in the Name of Je-  
sus;



495

*Jus*; and so *Origen* plainly writes, though ascribing as much to Angels, as any Man. We find, saith he, that those Spirits who from their Office are called Angels, are likewise from their excellent Nature, called Gods; but they are not called so because we should learn to adore or worship them with divine Honour, though they minister, and bring to us the Gifts of God: No, *οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμεῖς τὸν Θεόν, ὅς ἐστιν, ὁμιλοῦντες*, for all Supplication, and Prayer, and Intercession, and Thanksgiving, ought to be sent to God, the Lord of all, by that High-Priest who is above all Angels. And in another Place, where *Celsus* confesses, that indeed he would have God to be in all our Thoughts Night and Day, in Publick and Private, in Word and Deed, but yet thinks that we may *ἐξευμενίσαι τοὺς τῆδε ἀρχοντας*, endeavour by our Devotions to sweeten the Rulers of this World, (*i. e.* the Demons or Angels) and render them favourable to us; *Origen* thus answers him in these memorable Words; Our sole endeavour is to render God Merciful and Gracious to us, and he is *ἐξευμενίζόμενος εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ πείρῃ ἀρετῆς*, drawn to be our Friend by Piety, and all manner of Vertue. Then as the Shadow follows the Body, so also will the Angels, and all the Powers of Heaven follow his Will, and become our Friend, when once he declares that he is our Friend; we need not doubt of their good Will, when we have obtained his. We need not intreat, nor supplicate them for it; because they have the same Sense with

with God, and will take Delight in those whom he thinks worthy of his Favour.

They will not only bear a good Will to us, but also work together with us for our good; in so much that I dare say, *ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπορία*, &c. that with Men who out of choice and good Will, prefer the most excellent Things, and pray to God continually; there are Thousands of holy Powers who not invocated at all, will joyn their Prayers, and petition God together with them for his Blessing.

What can be more plain than these Words, which are enough to make all those blush, if they had any Shame left in them, who make such loud Noises to perswade the World that all Antiquity is on their Side, and yet stand so manifestly condemned by its expresse Sentence, whilst they pray to Angels to be their Patrons, and do their Business for them in Heaven. They alledge indeed, that Place of *Jacob* which I had occasion to mention in the Morning, to justify this paganish Practice; *Gen. 48. 16*. But in truth he saith not a word to their Purpose, for there is no Prayer to be found there to the Angel, nor so much as any Compellation of him. He doth not say, O thou Angel who hast kept me, preserve them, or assist them with thy Help, and thy Prayers, which would have been to the Business; but only desires that they might fare well, as he had done by the Ministry of the Angel which had attended on him: In short, this Sentence is only *ἐυχρισμός*, as the *Greeks* speak by way of Wish or Desire, not *προσευχισμός* by way

way of Supplication or Prayer. Good *Jacob* relates what the Angel had done for him all his Life long, and wishes he may do as much for his Grand-children after he was dead.

Now every one knows, that a Wish or a Desire that a good Thing, or happy Success may be, is no Prayer unto that Thing that it would be so, unless we will imagine (they are the Words of a very learned Writer of ours) that *Balaam* prayed to his own Soul, when in the self same Form of Words he desired, let my Soul die the Death of the Righteous, (so it is in the *Latin*;) or that *David* prayed to the Angel, when he said, let the Angel of the Lord persecute him, *Psal.* 35. 6. where he only desires it may be so, but prays not to the Angel that he would do it. What other Places they bring to the same Purpose, I must not stay now to enquire, because I take this only in my way; and you may be sure there are none which contradict the express Sentence of *St. Paul*, who condemns, in so many words, this worshipping of Angels, as a daring Invention of vain and proud Minds, who not satisfied with the Christian Simplicity, would have a number of Mediators, and take their choice among them as they thought good.

To conclude this Point, we need not doubt in the last Place, but

V. After all this Assistance which the holy Angels give us, they will be present, and ready to help us in the Agony of Death. They offer their Service to transport the Souls of good

K k

Men,



## 498 S E R M O N XVII.

Men, when they forsake these earthly Mansions, into the Bosom of *Abraham*, as our Saviour tells us, in the Parable of *Lazarus*; and he himself, as you heard, had an Angel came to strengthen or comfort him in his agony in the Garden, a little before his Death: and therefore why should we think that they who have been our Companions all our Life, should desert us at the last Gasps, and not rather be most careful of us, and lend us their brotherly Assistance, both before, and in, and after our Departure hence? Nay, if they rejoyce at the Conversion of a Sinner, as our Saviour Christ tells us, *Luke 15. 10.* we may conclude, that they are much more joyed to see his Perseverance to the End, and to behold him induring Pain patiently, and at last to see him resign up his Soul to God stedfast in the Faith and Love of Christ Jesus; and will do them all the good Offices they can, and when they have left the Body, convey them safe unto their Resting-place.

But I must say no more of this, because there remains a little to be said concerning the Second General Head, which I propounded in the Beginning; that is, of the Persons who are under such Care of the Angels expressed here in the Word *Theirs*, which refers to what went before concerning the Disciples of Christ. To these my Text limits my Discourse, who profess the Religion of our Saviour, and indeed we are not told what they do for others. The Apostle also thus limits it, *Heb. 1. ult. Are they not ministering*

# SERMON XVII. 499

ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for them that are Heirs of Salvation? Briefly then,

## PART II.

It is plain in the first Place, that the whole Christian Church is under the favour and protection of Angels. As *Daniel* saw an Angel which told him that *Michael* took care of the Concerns of the People of God, professing the Jewish Religion; so *St. John*, I told you, saw him and his Angels taking part with the Christian Church, as the Dragon and his Partakers did with the Idolaters.

Secondly, Particular Churches, the antient Christians thought, to have a particular Angel to watch over them; for thus *St. Basil*, I remember, comforts the Presbyters of *Nicopolis*, who by a Faction were thrust out of the Walls of the City, that they remained under the Protection of Heaven, and  $\delta \alpha \gamma \gamma \epsilon \lambda \omicron \varsigma \delta \tau \omicron \kappa \lambda \eta \nu \iota \alpha \varsigma \epsilon \rho \upsilon \epsilon \omicron \varsigma \sigma \upsilon \nu \alpha \pi \eta \lambda \theta \epsilon \nu \upsilon \mu \acute{\iota} \nu$  the An-

Epist. 191.

gel, the Guardian of the Church is come away from them together with you. The like I might cite out of *Gregory Nazianzen*, who speaks of the Angels to whom the Church of *Constantinople* were particularly committed, and concludes his Speech in this manner,

when he was leaving it,  $\chi \alpha \iota \rho \epsilon \tau \epsilon \alpha \gamma \gamma \epsilon \lambda \omicron \iota$ , Orat. 32. p. 518.

&c. farewell ye Angels, the Presidents of this Church, and of my Presence here, and Peregrination hence, if so be that my Affairs are in the Hand of God.

K k 2

And

And *Thirdly*, all the particular Members of Christ's Church are under their Care, even the weakest and most infirm Persons, when they have need of their Aid. That our Lord means by *little Ones*, such as were but newly entred into the Church, Novices, and new-born Babes; or such as had made but a small Progress, by reason of their dulness; or those that had but a little Skill and Prudence; or those that were but feeble and weak in their Strength; or those that were fearful and timorous, and apt to be shaken; or those in poor and mean Condition: Every one of these, being sincere, have this Comfort, that the Angels of God are their Helpers and Defenders. They give them their Assistance freely and readily against the Fraud and Malice, and Power of the Devil, and against all the Allurements of the Flesh, and the World; and all its Affrightments too, that might turn them aside from the Path of Christianity. Nay, they have this Comfort, that very mighty Angels attend on them; for so I showed you in the Morning, according to the Phrase of the *Jews*, this Passage is to be understood. And therefore,

*Fourthly*, We may conclude, that they who go on towards Perfection, that live very purely and holily, and grow more useful to the World, are under a very singular and affectionate Care of the Angels, who delight in those that are so like themselves, that is, spiritual and heavenly, pure and chaste, loving and kind, strong and powerful against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World. This I touched upon in the Morning, out of some  
of



# S E R M O N XVII. 501

of the ancient Writers of the Church; and it is the Sense of the *Psalmist*, when he saith, *the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the Man that trusteth in him:* That is, who will not, by reason of any Difficulties, or Hardships, or Straits, desert God and his Integrity, but resolves in Confidence of his Help, to hold out to the End.

*Fifthly*, The Ministers of Christian Religion, especially when Sincere and Holy, we may well conclude are very much in the favour of the Angels. For in the times of the Law you find, that *Joshua* the High-Priest stood before the *Angel of the Lord*, expecting, that is, what Sentence he would pronounce, and what Orders he brought in his Favour, when *Satan* stood at his right Hand, (the place of an Accuser in their Courts of Judgment,) to oppose his Enterprises which he had in hand, for the restoring the Divine Worship at the Temple of *Jerusalem*, *Zach.* 3. 1. This Angel, *St. Jude* tells us, was *Michael* the Archangel, (*ver.* 9. of his Epistle,) who contended with the Devil, and overcame him in the Dispute he had with him about the *Rudy of Moses*, i. e. of his Religion, Worship and Laws, which the Devil would not had restored again after the Captivity. The High-Priest very worthily indeavoured it, as much as *Satan* and his Instruments opposed it; and *Michael* (the Guardian, you see by this, of that Church) took *Joshua's* part, preserved his Person, kept him from being discouraged in his At-

tempt, and gave a check to the Enemy. By which we may learn, that if he was so much concerned to have the whole Body of *Moses* his Laws preserved from Violence, and defended those who defended it; he will not be less careful to assist with all his Forces, the Ministers of the Lord Jesus, who are the Supporters of his Religion, which is far more precious. Why should we think that they are not much beloved by the Angelical Powers, since the chief of these Ministers, the principal Pastors under the great Shepherd of the Sheep, are called by their Name, *the Angels of the Churches*? Thus that Greek writer whom I mentioned before, discourses in his Commentaries upon the *Revelation*. If we believe *that* an Angel follows every one of the faithful, *πολλῶν μᾶλλον τοῖς Σεμελίοις*, &c. much more may we be confident that they attend upon the Foundations of the Church, (so you know the Apostles and Prophets are called;) those that are the Sowers of the Evangelical Doctrine, and that are Co-workers with them to the publishing of the Gospel. And so we find in many Places, how they preserved and succoured the Apostles; and in the Old Testament we read, that very great Troops of them incircled *Elisha* when he was in Danger, being a Prophet, and of singular use at that Time. And thus may all those who in lower Stations serve God faithfully, expect his Blessing, Help and Protection, notwithstanding all the Menaces or Opposition of evil-minded Men. They may hope that he will assist

Arethas, p.

824.



list and defend them by his mighty Angels, as long as he hath any Employment for them; and when they have done their Business, send those heavenly Messengers to fetch them to himself.

And so now you see how all Persons in the Church, who are the true Disciples of Christ, have reason to praise God, and to rejoice in his holy Comfort, to render him their continual Thanks, and to do their Duties with chearfulness and gladness; he taking such Care of them, to assign them such a powerful Guard, such mighty Helpers, the principal of the heavenly Host, to take the charge of them. As the *Psalmist* calls upon the *Angels that excel in Strength that do his Commandments hearkning to the Voice of his Word, to bless the Lord together with him*; so should we call upon our own Souls to bless his holy Name for them: And that indeed is part of his meaning, when he bids them praise the Lord, and when he calls upon the Fire, Hail, Snow, Wind, and all other Creatures to do the same; he intends to stir up his own Affections to this heavenly Employment, of praising God in Contemplation of all his great and wonderful Works; which set forth his Greatness, Power, Wisdom and Goodness to the great Joy of all those who are in his Favour.

As we therefore praise him for the Meat that nourishes us; for the Sun, Moon and Stars that enlighten us: So let us not forget to praise him for the holy Angels, those glorious Lights, who are greater Ministers than any of those for our



504 S E R M O N XVII.

Comfort and Happiness. We know not how oft they cast a beam of Light into our Mind, and let fall a spark of Fire into our Hearts, and nourish and feed some way or other the good Inclinations and Purposes that are in our Souls; and therefore we should thank God for them, more than we do for our Meat and Drink, and Cloathing, or any of the Refreshments of this outward Life: Nay, what if I say that they make wholesome Seasons, and good Food, and all such Things? It was the Opinion, I am sure, of some of the ancient Christians, who thought themselves beholden to them every way; so that whatsoever we thank God for, we should not omit to acknowledge their Service, and the friendly Courtesies which they do us continually.

But I said something of this in the Morning, and there is no time remaining to speak more of it now, unless I should wave two Things which I ought to recommend to your Thoughts and Care, one of which I told you in the beginning, my Text would directly lead unto.

The First is this, that we should endeavour to imitate them, and become like to them in our Nature and Disposition. If we have a mind to gratifie them, if we would oblige those to whom we are already so much beholden, and invite them to be more kind unto us, it must not be by our Prayers to them, or Praises of them, as fond Superstition thinks; but by studying to resemble them all we can in their excellent Qualities. It is an Offence no doubt to these holy Beings, to see us address those Services to them, which

which they know to be due to none but God, the Creator of all. But they cannot chuse but take a delight in our Vertue and Goodness; both as by this means we approach nearer to their Nature, and are more fit for their Friendship and Converse; and also as they see herein some Effect of their Care and Pains, who have been so long Ministers of God for our Good. Let us imitate them in their Hatred of Wickedness, and their Love to Purity and Holiness of Life. Let us imitate them in their Charity and kind Disposition to do Good to others. In their Joy at the Amendment of Sinners, and their Progress in Vertue. Let us follow their Humility also and Condescension to those who are inferiour to us. Let us remember withal the Chearfulness and Readiness of their Obedience to the Divine Commands; and bear in mind their Watchfulness and Diligence, so as to stir up our selves to conform to that Pattern. And lastly, let us be zealous for the Honour of God, that his Kingdom may be upheld and increased, and the Kingdom of the Devil pulled down. In order to which I must desire you, in the *Second Place*, To take special heed how you do any thing to the Scandal of any of your Christian Brethren, and particularly those that are infirm. That is the Thing for which our Saviour alledges this Care of God over his little ones, by the Ministry of his Angels, that every Christian might take Care lest he gave Offence to those who were so dear to God, and tender'd so much by him. That is, lest he did any thing which should lay  
a Block

a Block in the Way of any of his Christian Neighbours, either to discourage him, or make him stumble, or plainly turn him out of his Christian Course; for that's the Meaning of this Word *offend*, or *give scandal*, in these holy Books; which is done Two Ways.

*First*, By despising of our Brethren, and setting them at nought. This is apt many times to sink Men of otherwise great Spirits, and therefore may much more deject the Feeble and Weak. It is a great Discouragement to a Man to see himself contemned and had in no Esteem at all. It is a Temptation to many Sins. It makes a Man have ill Thoughts of that Religion, which such Despisers profess: And therefore it is a most Unchristian Quality, and quite contrary to the Angelical Disposition, which doth not scorn us because we are so much below them.

*Secondly*, There is a greater Scandal than this, by giving of an ill Example; which may lead those aside, who mind more what others do, than what they say. And this especially concerns those who are the Guides of others, that they walk circumspectly, lest they draw many along with them into Destruction, who are so weak as to follow their Examples, rather than any Rules that they can give them. The antient Christians made bold to add, that we should be afraid to give any Offence to our Guardian Angel, which may make him turn aside from us, and leave his Charge. St. Basil expressly Lib. de Vera Virg. ly uses these Words; *We ought to have a Reverence to our Keeper, and not*



# SERMON XVII. 907

not despise the Angel to whom is committed *ἐν μέλει αὐτοῦ τὸ σωτηρίας ἡμῶν*, the Care of our Salvation. But this was, in Effect, said before : And nothing, we are to think, is more offensive to them, than to give any Occasion of Offence to those who are under their Care as well as our selves. Of this let us beware : And thus doing we shall fulfil the Intent of our Saviour's Discourse in this Place ; and we shall do all that which I now exhorted you unto, in Imitation of the Angels. For by having such a Regard to our Christian Brethren, as not to despise them, nor offend them ; we shall express our Piety, our Charity, our Humility, our Watchfulness, and our Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Honour of Christ's Religion, all together.



## A PRAYER.

**O** Great God! the Lord of all the Hosts of Heaven, both visible and invisible, who hast disposed all things in a most excellent and admirable Order, for the Service and Benefit of each other, and sendest thy Blessings as far as us in this lower World, by the Ministry of thy Angels ; the noblest of which refuse not to wait upon us, and to bring thy Favours to us : More especially I acknowledge thy astonishing Grace, in committing all thy Authority and Power in Heaven and Earth, unto One in our own Likeness, the

the Lord Jesus; who loved us so much as to lay down his Life for us, and who was so much loved by thee as to be raised from his Grave, and advanced far above all Principalities, and Powers, and Dominions, whom thou hast put in Subjection under his Feet.

I rejoice, O God; in this great Consolation which thou hast sent us by the Holy Ghost, who assures us of the Love that all the Heavenly Court bear unto us, as Members of the Body of the Lord Jesus; whom they likewise love, and honour, and worship, and constantly obey, desiring to look into the great Secrets of thy Love declared to us in thy holy Gospel. I praise thee, O blessed Lord of all, and thank thee, as well as I am able, rejoicing to think that thy most Glorious Majesty is lauded and magnified continually by the better Praises of those Heavenly Ministers, who excel in Strength, and do thy Commandments, hearkning to the Voice of thy Word. O how great is thy Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which so many Millions of Holy Ones delight to celebrate with their joyful Hymns; and rest not Day nor Night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which is, which was, and which is to come.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to receive my poor Praises, which I offer up unto thee, with the rest of the Children of Men, who have a pious Sense of thy great Benefits conferred on them. For thou hast not only put the Fear of Man upon

*Ecclus. 17. 4.  
5, 7, 8, 9.*

all Flesh, and given him Dominion over Beasts and Fowls; but put the Love of us in the Hearts of Angels, who own

us

*us for their Brethren; especially since thou hast manifested thy singular Love and Kindness to us in our dearest Lord and Saviour. I thank thee, that besides thy five Operations, thou hast imparted Understanding to us, and Speech also, an Interpreter of the Thoughts thereof. And hast set thine Eye upon our Heart, that thou mightest shew us the Greatness of thy Works, and hast filled us with the Knowledge of Wisdom, and shewest us Good and Evil. I thank thee, that thou hast given us to glory in thy marvellous Acts for ever, that we might declare thy Works with Understanding.*

*Blessed be thy Goodness, that I understand thou hast made us the Care of the Holy Angels, and particularly given them Charge of me, both Night and Day, ever since I was born. What are Men, that thou should'st honour them so far, as to send such glorious Ministers of thine from Heaven, in sundry Ages and divers Times, to bring the Messages of thy Divine Grace and Favour to us, who dwell here in these Regions of Darkness and Mortality? But that thou shouldest vouchsafe us the constant Attendance of any of them, yea, of the most Excellent, to whom thou hast committed the Care of thy Church; O what a Dignity is this, to which thou hast promoted us? How much do I owe thee for their watchful Care over my Body, Habitation, Relations, Friends, and other things belonging to me? I am exceedingly indebted to thee for their continual Protection and for the quiet, peaceable, and secure Enjoyment of my self, and all the Blessings of*



of this Life, by the Freedom they have given me from the Disturbance of the Devil and his Angels. And a great deal more am I indebted to thee for their charitable Assistance vouchsafed to my Soul, which hath been preserved by many invisible Means, from the Impostures of lying Spirits, and all Temptations to Vice and Wickedness. I thank thee that my Mind hath not been abused with the grossest Illusions; that I understand in any measure the everlasting Gospel, which by their Help hath been spread into these Parts of the World; that the Holy Apostles were protected by their Ministry, and the Opposers of thy Divine Truth thereby vanquished; that I have felt any Heavenly Affections stirring in my Heart; and have been able not only to resist any Assaults of the Enemy, but to overcome the Power of the evil one. I thank thee for thy Presence in our holy Assemblies, and that we have such glorious Companions in thy Divine Service. I thank thee, that I have any Hope they attend on me in these my private Addresses to thee, and are delighted in these Praises, Thanksgivings and Oblations that I make unto thy Divine Majesty; for all the Dangers which I have escaped, all the Good I have done, and all the Good I have been made Partaker of by thy infinite Bounty.

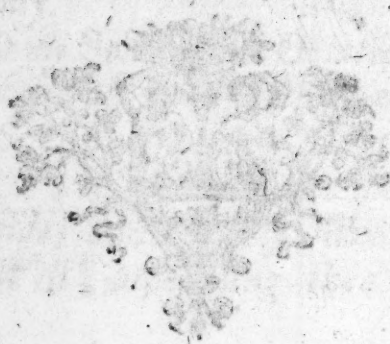
Accept, O my God, of the Oblation that I make of my Will, and all my Affections to thee; which is the best Sacrifice, I know, that I can present thee withal. I resign my Heart and all my Ways into thy Hands, and entirely submit my self unto thy blessed Will; beseeching thee to assist me so  
power-

*powerfully with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit, that I may constantly imitate those Heavenly Creatures, in my Reverence and awful Fear of thy Divine Majesty, in the Chearfulness of my Obedience to all thy holy Commands, in my Charity to my Neighbours, in Diligence and Watchfulness over my Charge, in humble Condescension to the Weakness of my Brethren, in my Joy at the Repentance of Sinners, and the Well-doing of all Men, in the Purity and Chastity of my Affections and Conversation, and in my sincere and upright Intentions to do my Lord and Master the best Service I can, whilst I am here in this World; that so I may have the Comfort of expecting their Assistance in the Agony of Death, and of a good Hope that they will carry me, when I depart from hence, into a Place of Rest and Peace, where I shall be better acquainted with them, and more sensibly enjoy their happy Society, and give thee Praise and Thanks in their delightful Company, for ever and ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.



powerfully with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, that  
I might constantly imitate those Heavenly Creatures,  
in my Reverence and true Fear of the Divine  
Majesty, in the Obedience of my Obedience to  
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a Place of Rest and Peace, where I shall be better  
acquainted with their loves, and more fully enjoy  
their holy Society, and give them Praise and  
Thanks for their helpful Company, for ever and  
ever. Amen.







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